

**The administrator character from Renaissance humanism to modernism: an examination of the authorial tradition of using characterisation to represent the mundane processes of their contemporary soundings, and as means through which to engage in discourses of power**

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**THE ADMINISTRATOR CHARACTER  
FROM RENAISSANCE HUMANISM TO MODERNISM**

**An examination of the authorial tradition of using characterisation to represent the mundane processes of their contemporary soundings, and as means through which to engage in discourses of power.**

**MARTIN DEMPSEY**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Westminster for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

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## **Abstract**

This PhD aims to investigate the development of a character type, referred to in this thesis as the ‘administrator’ - the character used by authors as a means to reflect through character both the mundane processes of their contemporary soundings, and as a means through which to address contemporary discourses of power. This character has historically functioned to alter the course of plots, determine the fates of other characters, and dictate the pace of a narrative, yet despite having pervaded literature and wider culture over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century, the character of the administrator has evaded detailed academic analysis of how and why such characters appear to be both wholly implicated in the plot’s outcome and yet are powerless to prevent the outcomes that it heralds.

The goal of this thesis is, then, to trace and analyse a major aspect of characterisation that has seldom been made explicit in literary studies: the importance of the role that characterisation plays in the text’s relationship with systematised power. By using the text’s principal administrator character, or means of characterising systematised power, as a prism through which to view the text, we may attempt to separate those aspects of the text which critique contemporary social hierarchies from those aspects of the text which reflect, or even affirm them, from the period of the early Renaissance through to the beginning of the twentieth century.

Through an ‘archaeology’ of such a character type, the thesis shows how administrator characters have been used historically to incorporate the author’s impressions of new organisational structures and the growing influence of certain institutions, from Machiavelli, More and Shakespeare through to the beginnings of modernism. The primary texts of this thesis have been selected as those which coincide with and appear to address major reconfigurations of collective organisation. By tracing the roots of the administrator character trope, as a kind of pre-history of our contemporary power relations (both in artistic representation and in our own relationships with systematised power), back to their earliest appearances in the Early Modern period, this thesis also seeks to contribute to a greater understanding of both the historical production of, and forms of subjectivity incorporated into, literary texts.

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*I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.*

## **Introduction**

This PhD aims to investigate the development of an evolving mode of literary delivery which coalesce over time into a character type, referred to in this thesis as the ‘administrator’ which has historically functioned to alter the course of plots, determine the fates of characters, and dictate the pace of a narrative, yet which continues to be regarded as a mere cipher in much literary criticism. Despite having pervaded literature and wider culture over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth century, the character of the administrator has evaded detailed academic analysis, which has hitherto failed to determine from whence it came, from where it derives its power, and why such a character appears to be both wholly implicated in the plot’s outcome and yet is powerless to prevent the outcomes that it heralds. The genealogy of the administrator character indicates that its roots lie within an attempt to evade questions addressing the consequences of the systematising of power in modernity – such as bureaucracy, institutional corruption, and unaccountability, among others – and thus may also hold implications for recent debates in philosophy and political theory.

Among the questions raised by recent theorizations of sovereignty and governmentality, the question of how power appears to become *simultaneously* weaker and stronger when proliferated through systems is often overlooked and remains, at any rate, under accounted for – in particular, at the level of those interactions which Foucault described as ‘little powers, of little institutions situated at the lowest level’.<sup>1</sup> Power, when systematised, seems weakened in terms of individual actualisation and liberty, as the individual becomes disempowered in the face of systems and procedures. Simultaneously, however, power seems strengthened by systems in the aggregate, as fewer exceptions are made, aberrations in procedure are limited, and practices become universally enforced.

The modern administrator character has its roots, I will argue, in the attempt to circumvent these questions, or to account for them by drawing upon other

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *Power (Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984)* ed. by James D. Faubion (London: Penguin, 1994), 3 edn, p. 87.

discourses, rather than addressing them directly. Initially, in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Europe collectively experienced a period of uncertainty regarding governance, as the future of individual sovereigns came under question, borders shifted, and technological advances and social changes eroded previously established feudal systems of power. Possibly in response, this era fostered a renewed interest in political theory, as the writings of figures such as Machiavelli, More, Erasmus, and even King James I entertained ideas which entailed the displacement of prior medieval models.

At the same time, in *The Prince* and *Utopia*, Machiavelli and More appear to show an awareness of some emergent problems concerning the systematisation of power – including issues of bureaucracy, accountability and institutional corruption – but also seem to *deliberately* evade them through the artful application of rhetoric. It is in this context that, I argue, the administrator character has its origins, in an attempt to account for the means by which power is systematised, and to describe the effect of this at a time when no other means of representing such systematisation were readily available to an author.

In light of academic neglect of the administrator character, this thesis seeks to trace the development of the administrator character from the outset of the early modern period through to the beginning of the twentieth century. In doing so, I have sought to present a chronological series of case studies in which the expression of systematised power may be examined as it appears in a particular text, and as it is revealed in that text's manner and mode of characterisation. This approach highlights, I suggest, hitherto unremarked aspects of the primary texts, and is, I argue, a fruitful means by which to begin examining their broader social and historical dimensions.

My motivation for this study is then, first and foremost, an interest in the role which characterisation plays in establishing the presence of a deeper infrastructure of institutions and systems within a given literary text. Each chapter is broadly structured around an initial attempt to identify how the authors accounted for such aspects of the phenomena of power and questions of sovereignty through recourse to the symbolic and conceptual 'tools' available. Furthermore, each chapter then attempts to examine how these contribute to the composite of characteristics which



represent systematised power *as they appear in the texts in the form of administrator characters*, immediately followed by an attempt to relate these to social and political developments within the text's historical period. Each chapter, in this way, attempts to analyse the primary texts with direct reference to their historical context and, in turn, to address each time period through the lens, as it were, of the primary text – itself a product of, and reflection upon, the ideas, symbolism and preoccupations of its time.

The thesis begins by considering the emergence of the figure of the administrator in a certain 'tone' of narration, or authorial 'style', understood as an aid to the rhetorical presentation of polemic, as exemplified in the works of Machiavelli and More. This authorial style, it is argued, solidifies over the course of the sixteenth century into actual individual characters, as typified by the plays of Shakespeare, in which such characters serve both as agents and embodiments of the systems of power of their time, whilst still conforming to the practical constraints of stage performance, and the palette of contemporary symbolic references.

The characterisation of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Ariel in *The Tempest*, for example, incorporates references to the contemporary significance of courtship and pomp in the maintenance of power, while the duality of Portia and Balthazar in *The Merchant of Venice* makes reference to institutions of mercantilism and the law, whose influence was increasing in Elizabethan England at the time.<sup>2</sup> From there, the thesis moves on to the ways in which Goethe's *Faust* develops, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a specifically modern use of the administrator character to represent the 'established order' in a new way, and then on to Dostoevsky's innovative depiction of the administrator character as a fundamentally *inauthentic* figure in 'The Grand Inquisitor' story told by Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov*. Although separated by more than half a century, I suggest *Faust* and 'The Grand Inquisitor' are interestingly similar in terms of their references to the past and in their concern for the future, but also in terms of their complex relationship with institutional and cultural changes taking place at their time of composition.

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<sup>2</sup> Other plays by Shakespeare, of course, address systematised power through characterisation, for example *Coriolanus* and *Measure for Measure*. This thesis focuses upon *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Tempest*, and *The Merchant of Venice* as these plays span the turn of the century, and thereby offer an interesting comparison to Goethe's *Faust*.

Finally, directly foreshadowing the ‘inhumanity’ and increasingly *impersonal* nature of administration to be found depicted in a number of twentieth-century works, the characterisation of administration comes in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* to incorporate disembodied entities and is primarily characterised less through singular characters than through symbolism and even the structure of the text itself. This structural function of the administrator character also has its literary roots in rhetoric, which — in line with the development of extended networks of information and organisation — crystallises into individual characters, and then dissipates as individual characters come to represent dispersed organisations. As examined in more detail in the chapters to follow, Machiavelli uses rhetoric to transform a set of observations and opinions into a coherent and persuasive argument, as for example in the following passage from *The Prince*:

Putting aside, then, all the imaginary things that are said about princes, and getting down to the truth, let me say that whenever men are discussed (and especially princes because they are prominent), there are certain qualities that bring them either praise or blame.<sup>3</sup>

By casting any conflicting commentary on princes as ‘imaginary things’, continually posing his statements as if begging the reader’s indulgence (‘let me say’, ‘putting aside, then’) and asserting that he is ‘getting down to the truth’, Machiavelli effectively relies more on his arguments and his rhetoric (his authorial tone, his ‘reasonableness’ and ‘disinterested observations’) to enhance his arguments than the (supposedly) historical evidence he cites. Similarly, almost four centuries later, Conrad, also addressing issues of governance, collective action, and the relationship between the individual and the collective, achieves a similar effect through his positioning of characters. In *Heart of Darkness*, as we will see, Conrad, literally, situates the character of the Accountant within earshot of the moans of dying Congolese, a passage which itself is located at the approximate centre of the narrative, and symbolically represents the point at which the weight of the evidence that the events in the Congo constitute a massacre becomes undeniable.

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<sup>3</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. by Robert M Adams (London and New York: Norton Critical Editions, 1988).

*Heart of Darkness* is the most iconic of the many texts in its era in which the rapid emergence of new forms of organisation, such as the commercial corporation, philanthropy, and new forms of political constitution, can be viewed as a key concern. As the final text examined, *Heart of Darkness* also appears, in this sense, to represent a certain ‘tipping point’ where the characterisation of the administrator begins, once again, to become a diffuse quality represented primarily through the manner in which the narrative is told. Where individual administrator characters are depicted, they are, most often, depersonalised ‘ciphers’, intended to reflect a view of the world (and the systems of power at work within it), rather than to convey any ‘deep’ inner life of their own. In this way, the thesis may also be read as offering something like a prehistory of the more familiar figure of the administrator as he appears, most famously, in Kafka’s modernist nightmares, written during the 1910s and 1920s, as well as in, for example, the dystopian science fiction of Zamiatin’s *We* and Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

As the intermediary between social structures and individuals, administrators have, in the wake of Kafka, Orwell and others, become, first and foremost, a ubiquitous ‘caste’ in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, signifying compliance, prescribing behaviour, and instantiating a sense of institutional power by indicating external forces influencing the events within the narrative beyond the control of the protagonist. My research attempts, among other things, to trace the emergence of this ‘type’, while demonstrating the ways in which it has been transformed since the sixteenth century. The thesis thus attempts to analyse the development of this characterisation of systematised power — the administrator character — in a fashion which follows the tradition of *genealogy* most influentially set out in Michel Foucault’s 1977 essay ‘Nietzsche Genealogy and History’. In this, the aim is to comment productively, then, upon the emergence of a specifically modern form of identity — the administrator ‘type’ — which comes, gradually, to constitute a pervasive heuristic in modern societies. In this way, the thesis seeks to use (literary) ‘history to dispel the chimeras of the origin’, as Foucault puts it.<sup>4</sup> Through characterisation (and, subsequently, through literary tradition and the use of literary techniques such as rhetoric, symbolism and plot structure), authors, artists and

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<sup>4</sup> Michel Foucault, *Aesthetics (Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984)*, ed. by James D. Fauston (London: Penguin, 1998), II, p. 340.

readers enable certain qualities or elements (characteristics, ideologies, principles) to be conflated — either consciously, or through general acquiescence to underlying institutional norms — in a manner that appears to come together ‘naturally’, and in a form, as Foucault states, ‘[w]here the soul pretends unification or the self fabricates a coherent identity’.<sup>5</sup> Some aspects of such composites may, of course, be unique to individual authors, but, more often, it appears that such characterisations are incorporated precisely for the purpose of interrogating and examining such existing or emergent ‘identities’. The primary texts have, therefore, been chosen specifically where this appears to be the case, and in accordance with Foucault’s own observation that the ‘isolation of different points of emergence [of identities] does not conform to the successive configurations of an identical meaning; rather, they result from substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests, and systematic reversals’.<sup>6</sup>

In order to limit the scope of research to a manageable and cohesive thesis, the study concentrates specifically upon the period in which social structures became gradually synonymous with administration or bureaucracy, and the concept of the ‘interchangeable’ functionary became recognisable as a figure whose role superseded pure characterisation or immediate influence on the plot. This is a period that stretches, as I try to show, from the European Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (in particular, the moment of Renaissance ‘humanism’) to the emergence of literary modernism around the end of the nineteenth century, through which develops the integral role played by the figure of the administrator in representing the rise of a new mentality of étatism.

In considering its early modern origins, it should be said from the outset, then, that the administrator character, as I understand it here, is categorically *not*, for example, the caricature of the bumbling minor official in the mode of *La Commedia dell’Arte*’s Pantaloon.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in keeping with the *Commedia dell’Arte*, which had its beginning in the second half of the sixteenth century, in a period when theatre plays were highly stylised, the figure of Pantaloon stands for the exact opposite. Pantaloon (or Pantalone in the original Italian) was a satirised version of the greedy

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<sup>5</sup> Foucault, *Aesthetics (Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984)*, p. 340.

<sup>6</sup> Foucault, *Aesthetics (Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984)*, p. 380.

<sup>7</sup> See R. S. Miola, *Shakespeare and Classical Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

and naive Venetian merchant. Miserly and slow witted, Pantaloon plays the ideal counterpart to Harlequin. Unlike the administrator character, who is initially attributed power within the narrative through the application of *rhetoric*, Pantaloon, tellingly, in keeping with *Commedia dell'Arte* more generally, would have delivered dialogue which would not have been understood. Within the *Commedia*, regardless of region, *il Capitano* would have spoken in Spanish, *il Dottore* in Bolognese, and *l'Arlecchino* in utter gibberish, and Pantaloon would have largely mimed. The focus was placed on physical performance rather than on spoken text. Shakespeare's Polonius in *Hamlet* was clearly influenced by the Pantaloon character, and that Polonius is a Pantaloon character, rather than an administrator character, I would argue, adds to the agony of choice which is at the heart of *Hamlet* — a play in which this theme is greatly enhanced by the complete *absence* of effective administrator characters as such.

By contrast, the earlier sections of the thesis, focusing on *The Prince*, *Utopia*, and a selection of Shakespeare's other plays, suggest that the depiction of the administrator has its earliest roots not in satire (as in Pantaloon), but, rather, in a structural imperative to indicate the influence, outside of the immediate narrative, of external forces — or institutional power — upon the characters and events of that narrative itself. Within these sections, the aim is thus to demonstrate how the earliest examples of an author's inclusion of a character, primarily deployed to indicate the influence of powers external to the narrative, are greatly influenced by Renaissance debates surrounding rhetoric in particular. In this light, it is important to note that views and practices of rhetoric, at the time these sixteenth and early seventeenth century texts were written, fell into two broad streams, each of which had been developed since the art's classical inception. The first of these was promoted by those who viewed the art of rhetoric as being a means to win an argument as an end in itself, regardless of one's purpose or the soundness of one's position — a view held both by those who affirmed the cynical use of rhetoric to achieve specific ends, and by those who rejected the art as, effectively, an extension of mendacity. During the Renaissance, this view was often held as being that which was articulated in Plato. The second, after the manner of Aristotle's systematic treatment of argumentation and rhetoric, viewed rhetoric as a legitimate subject in its own right. This view held rhetoric to have the potential to assist inductive reasoning in such a way as to reveal deeper

truths within debated subject matter. It was believed that this latter interpretation was broadly adopted by classical Roman culture, although, as Mills has shown, aspects of distrust regarding rhetoric were also rediscovered during rhetoric's re-emergence in the European Renaissance.<sup>8</sup> Rhetoric was, in this way, I argue, used by Shakespeare, in particular, to reveal character by having his characters reveal their motives and opinions through arguing in favour of their goals, and by allowing the audience to view his characters in discourse with other characters, and thus depicting his characters adapting their behaviour and arguments in line with their new audience — the other characters in the play.

It is, of course, frequently observed that power, as it is depicted in literary works (as elsewhere), is intimately related to knowledge. Indeed, in the wake of new historicist readings, from Dollimore and Tennenhouse to Greenblatt, this has become something of a truism of Shakespeare criticism particularly. While traditionally the discipline of history may have been concerned with 'events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations' — such as wars, battles, or treaties (the ostensible foci of many of Shakespeare's plays) — we are, today, more likely to view what changes the course of history as, in Foucault's words, 'the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it'.<sup>9</sup> And, in fact, power and what Foucault here refers to as a 'vocabulary' (discourses or systems of knowledge) are so closely related that they are depicted as effectively synonymous in much of the literature in which the administrator character may be read as playing a prominent role. Each is often viewed as, to all intents and purposes, a manifestation of the other. Thus, Shakespeare's Prospero in *The Tempest* rules his island through his arcane knowledge rather than his noble heritage, just as the source of the powerlessness of Joseph K in *The Trial* is his inability to navigate seemingly arbitrary rules, and the Party in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* seeks to maintain power by redefining the nature of knowledge *itself* ('two and two could have been three as easily as five, if that were what was needed'; '*Everyone* knows what is in Room 101').<sup>10</sup> In the administrator character, it is, then, above all this relationship

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<sup>8</sup> Catherine Mills, 'Aspects of Distrust of Rhetoric' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Birmingham, 1980).

<sup>9</sup> Foucault, *Aesthetics (Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984)*, p. 382.

<sup>10</sup> George Orwell, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London: Penguin, 1989), pp. 271-72. Emphasis mine.

between power and knowledge which is depicted through the systems — the administrations — which arise as a consequence of this relationship.

As far as I am aware, there is no specific study that has examined the particular mode of characterisation with which this thesis is concerned. Ben Kafka, in his recent *The Demon of Writing* (2012), has studied ‘paperwork’s symbolic function — its function of telling us about the world and what to do or what not to do to it’, as a means of approaching the historical development of different ideas of bureaucracy.<sup>11</sup> Similarly, Thomas Richards in *The Imperial Archive* (1993) has, for example, discussed the degree to which empire, in particular, is ‘partly a fabrication’, arguing that ‘narratives of the late nineteenth century are full of fantasies about an empire united not by force but by information’, representing a deeper underlying conception of ‘empire as an immense administrative challenge’.<sup>12</sup> Richards speculates how interesting it would have been to further examine the ‘relation of information and imperialism’, as ‘problems of knowledge and information can be found everywhere in imperial fiction’,<sup>13</sup> while Kafka suggests that any given ‘theory that purports to explain the techniques of knowledge must take these fantasies [of power and powerlessness] into account’.<sup>14</sup> The scope of such projects, however, is defined as beyond both Kafka’s and Richards’ respective areas of focus.

This thesis takes a different approach, arguing that a tracing of the concepts and ideas which fed into the characterisation of systematised power may grant insights into the historical production of, and even the subjectively experiential aspects embedded in, literary texts. As social and cultural constructs, texts may accurately reflect, subvert, and even perhaps inspire, the development of centralised systems of governance. By assessing the artistic expression of the ambitions, reservations and ambivalences experienced both in the face of, and within the mechanics of, the rise of new administrative bodies in modernity, a greater awareness of the workings of the text may be gained. The ultimate aim of this thesis, if not exactly ‘to use the text as a basis for the reconstruction of an ideology’, is thus, in part at least, to use the chosen texts to make apparent the influence of a carefully crafted and evolving

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<sup>11</sup> Ben Kafka, *The Demon of Writing* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), p. 108.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas Richards, *Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Richards, *Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> Kafka, *The Demon of Writing*, p. 144.

manner of literary delivery (referred to within this thesis as administrator character and as a 'trope' in the loosest sense -- as a 'figure of speech' in which the administrator character is the 'figure') within *our* contemporary power relations, and to trace the roots of this trope back to their inception. By so doing, it seeks to gain a greater understanding of how culture and power relations manifest themselves and intertwine.

The systematisation of power in terms of the texts studied, and within the remit of this thesis, incorporates both the discipline of power exercised through the application of knowledge, and the acquiring of knowledge through the application of power. This process — the transference of power into a systematic process, and the endowing of a system with power — inevitably requires language ('vocabulary' in Foucault's terms) and some reference to shared symbols. Because of this, literature, it appears, may have a particular ability to reference, critique, explore, and give an 'experiential' fictional form to such systems. Indeed, it may be suggested that literature is an ideal medium for the representation of how power, knowledge, and administrations manifest themselves in modern societies, since the role language plays in administration may be directly echoed or mimicked within the text itself. It is, as such, that this thesis suggests that literature, of all media prior to the twentieth century, has been perhaps uniquely equipped to examine systematised power — an examination that is most effective when forms of characterisation are incorporated. It is the possible genealogy of this process — the emergence of 'the administrator character' — that is sought within this thesis.



### **The Prince and Utopia and the foundations of the administrator character**

*'Nothing makes a prince so esteemed as great exercises and setting a fine example / which in our cities I may rather wish for than hope after'*

*Utopia* and *The Prince* are rhetorical exercises which sought to mediate the relationship between the individual and the state. This chapter will attempt to demonstrate how early modern European adaptations of classical rhetoric played a central role in the *literary* examination of administrative systems. The growth of commerce, technological advances and colonial exploration (to name but three of the major forces at work during this era) demanded intellectual accounts which could provide a conceptual framework through which to view and respond to systems of administration. Scholars did so by returning to and adapting classical accounts, emphasising systems of administration as *the* means by which to both describe and adapt to these changes. By approaching *The Prince* and *Utopia* as rhetorical devices, used to increase credibility and establish authority, and situating them within the history of such accounts that aimed to provide arguments which accounted for the influence of existing institutions and to explain their intricacies, I will thus seek to demonstrate how Machiavelli and More exemplify the ways in which writers of the period established a manner of description that would come to be embodied, by later authors, in individual administrator characters.

Using the administrator 'trope' (loosely used here to refer to this rhetorically informed, power oriented, literary delivery with a sense of sublimated personal) as a prism through which to view the texts, two broad categories of readings emerge of both Thomas More's *Utopia* and Machiavelli's *The Prince*: immediate contemporary readings which read the texts as polemical incitements (albeit less so in the case of *The Prince* due to a significant lag between the time of the text's penning and its wider circulation), and retrospective readings that interpret the texts as manifestos. Machiavelli and More, as part of the progression of their arguments, create the impression of a machinery of state capable of imposing central control, and portray the character of the administrator as a conduit to unspecified forces — which, despite

acknowledging influences outside the text's remit, are never explicitly defined. Immediate readings of *The Prince* and *Utopia*, as well as historical archives, indicate that they entered into (and were interpreted within) an open intellectual debate concerning the uses and applications of rhetoric which incorporated spectacle and pageantry as the 'rhetoric' of governance. Placed within this context, the texts' subject matter suggests an integral element of ambiguity as to the intended reading of the text, which indicates an intention to serve as polemical incitements. When read, however, without the context of the art of rhetoric, as in most later readings, *The Prince* and *Utopia* appear to be proposing *doctrines*; an effect in part due to the influence of modern ideas about what administration is and the ways in which its *present* manifestations have been retrospectively layered onto the text by modern readers. Hence, for example, the readings of these works as 'a great humanitarian's exertions' (More) and as 'diabolical' in 'character' (Machiavelli), offered by Leo Strauss and Adam Ulam, respectively.<sup>15</sup> In fact, Machiavelli and More's administrators are never explicitly described as a single character or as having a specific set of characteristics, but appear to have a predictive quality when these self-same texts are read without an explicit awareness of the specific historical role this 'character' (or, if one will, 'flavour') originally played within the structure of the text. While no depiction of any specific mode of governance forms the pre-history of the administrator trope, these texts support the proposition that the rhetoric used to carry the reader along with the force of the author's argument works to create the impression of a set of characteristics possessed by the author, and which are presented as active within the societies they describe. It is these implicit assumptions which greatly influence how the machinery of subsequent governance is portrayed, with considerable consequences for the depiction of administrator characters in particular.

'A truthful and pleasant work of the best state of a common wealth | the opportunity of understanding in the shortest time': Reading *Utopia* and *The Prince* as contributions to debate

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<sup>15</sup> Leo Strauss, *Thoughts on Machiavelli* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1978), Adam Ulam, 'Socialism and Utopia', *Daedalus*, 94.2 (1965), pp. 382-400.

Readings of *Utopia* and *The Prince* which neglect their political context and contemporary debates around rhetoric become increasingly dislocated, until both texts are primarily assessed in the manner of manifestos. Biographical information suggests that More and Machiavelli's conception of their 'reader' would have been very different, but that the intended nature of their *reading* appears to have been similar in tone. Whereas More intended his work for publication, going so far as to recruit Erasmus as an editor, Machiavelli's intention was to be read (at least initially) by Lorenzo de' Medici.<sup>16</sup> Whereas More sought to enter into intellectual debates concerning governance, Machiavelli appears to have been seeking patronage by advertising his services as an experienced diplomat, historian and rhetorician. Despite the apparent difference in the authors' presumed audience, both texts are, however, orientated around the goal of representing an *argument*, and, in order to maintain their argument's integrity, the authors used the techniques of rhetoric to imply abilities and processes on behalf of 'authority' (whether that of the state, the Church, or a Prince). These implied abilities were, given actual state infrastructures at the time, highly improbable (to say the least) and perhaps impossible (even with today's technology and resources). Nonetheless, the liberties taken by these two authors appear to have shaped subsequent literary representations of the 'role' of power and of its administrators, to the point of altering public debates concerning the nature of governance, and altering perceptions around the capacity and potential of governmental influence.

To begin with More's text, while Thomas Cromwell, writing within the same half decade as *Utopia* and *The Prince*, was described by Pilkington as 'the man who was the first true civil servant, as we should recognise the term',<sup>17</sup> I will argue that it was, in fact, More (along with Machiavelli) who had the greater long-term influence on political science and on emergent discourses of governance. In his study of the British Civil Service, Pilkington argues that:

The Civil Service as we understand it today could only really begin with the Reformation's disestablishment of so many churchmen

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<sup>16</sup> For more, see J. H. Hexter, *More's Utopia: The Biography of an Idea*, The History of Ideas Series (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 1952), V, p. 43.

<sup>17</sup> Colin Pinkington, *The Civil Service in Britain Today* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 10.

[which] required the creation of an entirely new tier of lay bureaucrats and administrators, and the dissolution of the monasteries and the break with Rome meant that whole new areas of competence and organisation were put into the hands of the royal administrators as they took over land and property belonging to the Church and appropriated church revenues.<sup>18</sup>

It was upon the basis of Henry VII's reforms that his son, Henry VIII, thus licensed a secular bureaucracy directed to:

... masterminding the dissolution of the monasteries and the sequestration of church property to the benefit of the royal purse. His [Cromwell's] success and sheer administrative ability gave him the authority ... [to] reorganis[e] the entire royal administration and [turn] it for the first time into a national rather than a household system of government.<sup>19</sup>

In this context, Cromwell, according to Roper, makes explicit what the citizens within *Utopia* portray implicitly — the ability to obfuscate the practical limitations of central power in order to maintain the illusion of control. This is apparent in the advice, for example, that he gives to Chelsea on deportment within the King's service:

The advice offered by Sir Thomas More to Cromwell was given in a very solemn tone ... you shall, in you council-giving to his grace, *ever tell him what he ought to do, but never what he is able to do.* So shall you show yourself a true faithful servant, and a right wise and worthy counsellor? For if a lino [lion] knew his own strength, hard were it for any man to rule him.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Pinkington, *The Civil Service in Britain Today*, p. 10.

<sup>19</sup> William Roper and Samuel Weller Singer, *The Life of Thomas More* (London: Press of C. Whittingham for R. Triphook, 1822), p. 55.

<sup>20</sup> William Roper and Singer, *The Life of Thomas More*, p. 102.

Cromwell's description significantly echoes here the economic relations of *Utopia* as read by Samuel Bostaph:

... the picture painted is one of a highly regimented society with its production, consumption and leisure activities meticulously planned. No basis for the planning is presented, other than the assertions of the narrator as to what is considered necessary and desirable. The method of planning goes unmentioned, but apparently is the fiat of the elected rulers of the General Council of the island and the senates of the cities.<sup>21</sup>

When read as a principally humanist work rather than a political one, the 'unmentioned' aspects of *Utopia* do not, then, suggest a desire to remain a 'faithful servant' (by facilitating an illusion of omnipotence). Instead, the text's lack of 'method' forces the reader to contemplate the conditions under which such behaviour would continue *despite* the influence of overt authority. The turmoil which forms the context for *Utopia* ceases to appear to be the motivation for the author, and functions more as a source of inspiration or as a continual metaphor. The political references on this reading form part of the rhetoric of *Utopia* that works towards a broader goal of providing a 'spiritual' exercise for the reader by placing familiar moral quandaries within an alien context. This implication of moral and personal disinterest and ambiguity of motive is open to misinterpretation and appropriation; however, it is these aspects which appear to have been employed by later authors precisely as *attributes* of their individual administrator characters.

Machiavelli's writing emerged within an equally tumultuous political era. The Medici family's rule was effectively an aristocracy purporting republicanism, within which Machiavelli had served as a government secretary, one of the *amici* (friends and supporters of the Medici) who acted as a tier of administrators. Machiavelli worked within this system from 1498 to 1512 until Lorenzo de' Medici fired him on suspicion of sedition and as a supporter of *governo largo* (a broad, less oligopolistic republican government). In 1513, *Il Principe* (*The Prince*) was written in what

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<sup>21</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, "Letter to the Signoria", in *Legazioni*, 1502), pp. 260-68. Samuel Bostaph, 'Utopia from an Economist's Perspective', in *The Thomas More Studies Conference* (University of Dallas, 2005).

Machiavelli portrays (in his letter dated 10 December 1513, to Francesco Vettori) as a state of reflective repose: ‘When evening comes [...] I enter into the ancient courts of ancient men [...] they in their humanity answer me, and for four hours I feel no boredom.’<sup>22</sup> Machiavelli actively promotes this work as a proffering of tribute, describing it as ‘discussing the definition of a principedom, the categories of principedoms, how they are acquired, how they are retained, and why they are lost’. Machiavelli is equally clear about the intended audience for *The Prince* and its intended effect - ‘It ought to be welcomed by a prince, and especially by a new prince; therefore I am dedicating it to His Magnificence Giuliano’ - revealing the extent to which Machiavelli perceived every aspect of his text — and, indeed, every interaction — to be subject to rhetorical analysis.<sup>23</sup>

Both *The Prince* and *Utopia* were written using humanist rhetoric as a means of interpreting and analysing the world. If one accepts rhetoric, as it is considered by these authors, to be a tool to understand those concepts which cannot be established logically or empirically, such as authority or power, rather than as just a formal system of oratory (as it tends to be understood today), *The Prince* and *Utopia* would then constitute a way of seeing and being within the world that would become ubiquitous cultural references for future depictions of power, society, and of administrator characters. It is this, in part at least, that the following sections will attempt to show.

‘[The King] foresaw [wealth] wouldn’t support the king in battle against his own people | Of being feared or loved ... a wise prince should establish himself on that which is in his own control’: *The Prince* and *Utopia* as rhetorical arguments

The humanist *interpretation* of classical rhetoric was more important for *The Prince* and *Utopia* than classical rhetoric per se. Early Modern Europe, c. 1450–1550, saw many previously decentralised feudal regimes coalesce. Italy, however, still

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<sup>22</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. by Quentin Skinner and Russell Price (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 128. All quotes taken from this edition unless otherwise noted. This edition was translated by Adams, whose 1992 interpretation emphasises Machiavelli’s fluid linking of ideas over a strict transposing of punctuation.

<sup>23</sup> Machavelli, *The Prince*, p. 128.

contained multiple provinces without a clear, unifying figurehead. Subsequently, as the demand for alternative systems of governance and administration grew, there was a renewed interest in the classics. Lucius Mestrius Plutarch's *Lives* is often credited with stimulating a renewed interest in classical Greek and Roman culture. This rediscovery is most clearly evident in the scholarship and new approaches towards education in which the emphasis shifted from theology to the humanities. The inspiration for this 'renaissance', however, may be interpreted as being rooted within the emergence of centralised monarchies as the demand for inspirational political and administrative systems arose. Humanist interpretations of classical rhetoric — integral to both Aristotle's and Plato's theories of social order — were incorporated into propositional systems of governance, but act as more than propositions within *Utopia* and *The Prince*.<sup>24</sup> Instead, within *Utopia* and *The Prince*, the principles of rhetoric permeate the text as if they were unifying principles, a world view which, I argue, would dramatically influence the later characterisation of administrators as an actual character type.

Raphael's famous painting *The School of Athens*, painted c. 1509–10, shows Plato gesturing towards the heavens, indicating the need to refer to the realm of absolute forms in all instances, while Aristotle is depicted as extending his arm, indicating the golden mean.<sup>25</sup> This illustration may be viewed as a depiction of the popular conception of Plato and Aristotle according to Renaissance scholarship, rather than as an accurate depiction of the actual complexities of their thought. That Raphael depicts the two central figures holding each other's gaze, engaged in debate, emphasises how these authors were being read in a kind of symbiotic tension, and possibly suggests that their teachings are to be taken 'in equal measure'. The Renaissance view of rhetoric was one that may be seen as similarly twofold: as an art

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<sup>24</sup> 'Propositional governance' refers here to political philosophies advocating governance based upon axioms or statements, such as a bill of rights. Such systems may be seen as opposed to modes of governance founded, for example, upon supposedly inherent qualities, such as Theocracy or Monarchy. Technocracies, Monopolies and Tyrannies would also be examples of non-propositional modes of governance.

<sup>25</sup> *The School of Athens* Stanza della Segnatura (Vaticano). Comparisons of Raphael's preliminary drawings, combined with physical examinations of the fresco in 1996, suggest significant changes were made prior to completion of the fresco in 1510, and after completion of the fresco in 1511, which possibly radically altered it. These changes could not have been made by Raphael, which suggests that the influence of the image was great enough to justify making revisions.

which may enhance understanding and advocate truth (which was widely attributed to Aristotle, due to his defence of the art) and as an abuse of truth which may obfuscate and misconstrue (which was held to be Plato's view).<sup>26</sup> Each view, however, held that an awareness of the rhetorical arts, either to ward against its influence, or to avail of its utility, was a central aspect of any humanist education. Whereas Aristotle and Plato both emphasise that the moral purpose in life is the achievement of an authentic happiness, or *eudemonia*, the Renaissance placed a greater emphasis on applying the principles of the ancient and classical texts to contemporary ends. Such texts were thus read as holding valuable lessons for secular application, the most practicable of which was classical rhetoric.

Rhetoric as it was originally envisioned by classical civilisations fulfilled a role akin to logic, and was intended to establish truths. As such, rhetoric achieved a new importance as the methods advocated by Classicists as being capable of discerning, for example, the proper form a government should take, were contextualised within works such as *The Prince* and *Utopia*. Machiavelli and More both depict acquiring and using authority as equitable with 'winning an argument', and therefore see that process as subject to the methodologies of a rhetorical exercise. Classical rhetoric was perceived as a compelling epistemology through which to analyse and describe politics, and by incorporating formal rhetorical techniques, Machiavelli and More both illustrate and interrogate existing methods of governance in a provocative manner. The 'advice' of *Utopia* and *The Prince* is presented within a political context which is never fully described, in which actions appear to have outcomes that are never fully accounted for, and in which precise details are rare and often uninformative. This invests the texts with a sense of authority and implies that the author's arguments are informed with a greater level of understanding than that which is explicitly stated within the text.

Machiavelli describes how the influence of one man, a Prince, may be viewed as vital for the founding of a republic, and argues that 'it is necessary for a single man

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<sup>26</sup> Plato portrays Socrates as arguing that 'the rhetorician need not know the truth about things; he has only to discover some way of persuading the ignorant'. See Plato, *Gorgias*. trans. by E. M. Cope (London: Forgotten Books, 2008), p. 22. Aristotle argued that if rhetoric could be abused, this is true of 'all good things except virtue'. See Aristotle, *The Art of Rhetoric*. trans. by H. C. Lawson-Tancred (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 2.



to be the one who gives it shape, and from whose mind any such organisation derives'.<sup>27</sup> The influence that these individuals may have is attributed by Machiavelli, in part at least, to the skilled application of rhetoric:

... Francesco dressed himself in his most illustrious garments, covering them with his white bishop's rochet, and confronting the armed citizens, he stopped them with his presence and his words, something that was noted and praised throughout the city for many days afterwards [...] there is no more effective or necessary remedy for restraining a multitude than the presence of a single man who appears in person and is revered.<sup>28</sup>

Thomas More's *Utopia* is just as informed by rhetoric, as can be seen from its various references to legal practice, a discipline through which humanist interpretations of classical rhetoric directly influenced the governance and management of English society. The practice of 'mooting', the 'formulation and debate of a hypothetical case or set of circumstances', was, for example, the primary means by which practitioners of law developed and distinguished themselves.<sup>29</sup> Sir Thomas Elyot found in mootings 'an exercise wherein is a manner, a shadow, or figure of the ancient rhetoric [...] a case is appointed to be mooted by certain young men, containing some doubtful controversy [...] wherein they do much approach unto Rhetoric'.<sup>30</sup> In this way, hypothetical exercises moved from the study of read propositions through to disputations, with the highest levels of development recognised in the delivery of lectures or the presiding over depositions and providing summations while sitting on the bench at moots.<sup>31</sup> That the practice of 'mooting' was an integral practice of More's own thought is tragically evident in the outcome of More's trial for treason, which took place on 1 July 1535. The trial was held in

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<sup>27</sup> Niccolò Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, trans. by Julia Conaway Bondanella and Peter Bondanella, 2 edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 41.

<sup>28</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, p. 133.

<sup>29</sup> Wilfrid R. Prest, *The Inns of Court under Elizabeth I and the Early Stuarts 1590-1640* (London: Longman, 1972), p. 116.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Elyot, *The Book Named the Governor*, ed. by S. E. Lemberg (London: Dent, 1962), p. 38.

<sup>31</sup> J. H. Baker, *The Legal Profession and the Common Law: Historical Essays* (London: Hambledon Press, 1986), p. 9.

response to what Henry VIII saw as repeated snubs by More to take the oath prescribed in the 1534 Act of Succession, which demarcated only those children born of Anne Boleyn as legitimate. More's refusal *appears* to have been on the grounds that such an oath carried an implicit denial of the validity of Henry's first marriage.

Subsequently, More was accused of four counts of treason, all of which More denied, and against which he conducted his own defence. Firstly, it was alleged that he had maliciously refused on the 7th of May in that year to accept the King's supremacy over the Church in England. More countered by insisting that, as silence in English legal prescient constitutes consent, he had not refused. Secondly, More was accused of writing treasonous letters to Fisher concerning King Henry. More argued that none of these letters contained any direct references to the state. Thirdly, it was alleged that More had attempted to raise sedition by describing the Act of Supremacy as a 'two-edged sword' (that is, a law which if flouted would result in one's physical end, and if obeyed would mean one's spiritual sanction). More admitted as much, with the caveat that he had said *if* the statute was like a two-edged sword, then it would be *possible* that the statute could be reversed by a later Papal ruling. Finally, More was accused of denying Parliament's power to declare that King Henry was the head of the Church in England. This charge was based entirely on a single conversation, between Sir Thomas More and Solicitor General Richard Rich, which had, by all accounts, taken place on 12 June whilst More was incarcerated. Visiting More's cell, Rich engaged More in a conversation in which More, allegedly, explicitly denied Parliament's authority to make Henry the head of the Church. More's defence, again, rested upon the power of the hypothetical, appealing to the deep tradition of 'mooting' in English Law:

And yet, if I had so done indeed, my lords, as Master Rich has sworn, seeing it was spoken only in familiar, private conversation, without affirming anything, but only putting forth cases without other unpleasant circumstances, it cannot justly be taken to be spoken maliciously, and where there is no malice, there can be no offence.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> William Roper and Singer, *The Life of Thomas More*, p. 43.

The judges ruled that More had passed beyond the hypothetical into the malicious intent required for a verdict of being held guilty under the Treason Act. He was beheaded five days later on 6 July 1535.<sup>33</sup>

That mooting was such a constant in More's life and works suggests that *Utopia* may thus be read as a literary application of this principle. The rational disinterest employed by More, fostered by the practice of 'putting the point', echoes Machiavelli's analytical and pragmatic style, as both authors cater to the interests of their intended readership and to the tenor of their peers' social discourse. Rational disinterest and pragmatism are, of course, traits commonly utilised by subsequent authors in their depiction of administrator characters, but before More and Machiavelli (and their subsequent caricatures), it is important to note, these attributes were by no means synonymous with political emissaries.

'They rejoice and vaunt themselves, if they vanquished and oppress their enemies by craft and deceit | [a prince]... must endeavour only to avoid hatred': Reading coercion and spectacle as the 'rhetoric' of state within *Utopia* and *The Prince*

Machiavelli and More both equate the rhetoric required to dominate an argument with the ability to rule. Both authors explicitly describe the *perception* of power as being synonymous with *holding* power. Both authors utilise rhetorical techniques to empower their descriptions with an air of authority, and, where Machiavelli actively advises on the types of spectacle a Prince may employ for the best effect and uses his own rhetoric to flatter his reader, More subversively illustrates how powerful rhetoric is as a means to avoid addressing practical considerations. This is not a failure on the part of the authors to provide detailed guidance on the establishment of state infrastructure (a very modern conception); rather, it is a conscious choice to further demonstrate the power of rhetoric and its applicability to governance. The texts are infused with rhetoric, and the idea of rhetoric as the means to imply authority and insight (which both authors exploit) is instrumental in the emergence

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<sup>33</sup> J. Duncan and M. Derrett, 'The Trial of Sir Thomas More', *English Historical Review*, LXXIX.CCXII (1964), pp. 449-77.

of the later administrator trope. To put it another way: *The Prince* and *Utopia* both substitute rhetoric for the actual capacity of a system of administration that would be recognisable, as such, to a modern reader.

An awareness of this trope, or its retrospective influences upon the reading of these texts, does not depend upon adopting a position within the debates surrounding different conceptions of rhetoric (and this thesis does not aim to enter into the academic and critical debates concerning rhetoric more generally). Instead, by adopting Greenblatt's concept of 'self-fashioning' in its broadest sense, these texts may be read as historically determined and determining modes of cultural production, whereby both texts may be said to portray the centrality of rhetoric within the political process.<sup>34</sup> Argumentation, in which propositions are analysed as much for their deftness as for their rigour, becomes a cultural reference point that functions as an analogy for self-fashioning (in Greenblatt's sense), and which implies that power and the portrayal of power are synonymous, and that the techniques of rhetoric could be applied to many aspects of life, including the wielding of power. The re-readings to which these texts have been subject, and which they have inspired, appear broadly to have assumed that the administrative systems implied as active within *The Prince* and *Utopia* would require individual agents who rationalised their actions by displacing any personal culpability onto the administration. This assumption appears, then, to have influenced subsequent authors up to and including Foucault:

... [T]he successes of history belongs to those who are capable of seizing these rules, to replace those who had used them, to disguise themselves so as to pervert them, invert their meaning, and redirect them against those who had initially imposed them; controlling this complex mechanism, they will make it function so as to overcome the rulers through their own rules.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> For more on the perceived importance of rhetoric within the court see: *The English Works of Sir Thomas More*, ed. by W. E. Campbell and A. W. Reed (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1931), I, 19.

<sup>35</sup> Foucault, *Power (Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984)* p. 151.

As depictions of society's governance ultimately come to influence the mode of governance, some present day readings have thus approached these texts as if they were intended to be read as viable methods of governance, while the historical and biographical evidence suggests they were intended as polemical intellectual exercises. Indeed, this tendency is itself a tribute to the authors' success in implying traits and characteristics which are never explicitly described.

It is significant that More actively favours impact over practicality, as evidenced in his depiction of Utopian education. Raphael Hythloday, the central figure in *Utopia*, asserts that Utopians 'in music, dialectic, arithmetic, and geometry [...] have found out just about the same things as our great men of the past' yet 'have not discovered even one of those elaborate rules about restrictions, amplifications, and suppositions which our own schoolboys study in the *Small Logicals*' — Peter of Spain's textbook of logic.<sup>36</sup> More directly references here Martianus Capella's definition (first outlined in the fifth century) of the seven 'Liberal Arts'.<sup>37</sup> These were divided into two parts: the *trivium* of grammar, logic and rhetoric; and the *quadrivium* of arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. Whilst providing a bedrock of the Scholastic educational tradition, More's apparent reservations in the manner with which they were combined with 'Second Intentions' express a concern that came to typify the humanist movement, which promoted a secular interpretation of the classics.<sup>38</sup> The Spanish humanist philosopher Juan Luis Vives, for example, described the treatment of logic in university curriculum as acting 'like a Trojan horse, from which has come the ruin and conflagration of all the liberal arts'.<sup>39</sup> More's description of the view of education within Utopia remains true to the 'liberal arts' conception as serving to prepare an individual for public life. In Utopia,

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<sup>36</sup> *Peter of Spain Tractatus*, ed. by L. M. de Rijk (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1973).

<sup>37</sup> Capella's major work was written perhaps about AD 400 and certainly before AD 439. Its overall title is not known. Manuscripts give the title *De nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii* to the first two books and entitle the remaining seven *De arte grammatica*, *De arte dialectica*, *De arte rhetorica*, *De geometrica*, *De arithmetica*, *De astrologia*, and *De harmonia*.

<sup>38</sup> Second Intentions concern the capacity for abstraction by which, for example "a man" or "a Daisy" becomes "men" or "a flower", where individual or multiple instances become grouped within a class or set united by common qualities.

<sup>39</sup> Juan Luis Vives was a noted Spanish humanist philosopher born in Valencia who fled the Inquisition to study in Paris and settled in Bruges in 1512, two years after the publication of *Utopia*. For more see James D. Tracy, *Erasmus of the Low Countries* (London: University of California Press, 1996), p. 63.

as education is freely available to all, social boundaries are by implication blurred — meaning all citizens are involved in public life, in so far as education is depicted as open to all, including women and, presumably, slaves. Significantly for the conception of the role of administration (and the infrastructure, which is implied but never specified as being at work within Utopia), no description is given of any system of monitoring, verification, funding, accommodation or accreditation for the education which is presented as being so abundant that all citizens had daily access.

In this passage, More seems to be challenging what he appears to perceive to be a Scholastic orthodoxy in education, referencing Peter of Spain's *Summulae logicales* ('Small Logistics') which contained a section devoted to Categories. Hythloday describes 'those rules [...] which here our children in every place do learn'. Here Raphael is referring, presumably, to Belgium, the city of Antwerp, then part of the Duchy of Brabant, rather than England.<sup>40</sup> Even more provocative is Raphael's description of how Utopians 'were never yet able to find out the Second Intentions, insomuch that none of them all could ever see man himself in common'.<sup>41</sup> This single sentence may contain the most radical proposition in *Utopia*. Such a proposition dismisses the fundamental classical roots of logic.<sup>42</sup> Even more provocatively, this sentence could be read as More proposing that the root of the Utopians's capacity for fairness, equity and parity may lie in their inability to see others as part of a social group or class, and their ability to only ever view others as individuals. Were such Second Intentions, or abstractions, impossible, it would be impossible to view events as one part of a 'type' of instances; and instead, they would be viewed as unique instances, each requiring an individualised response and specific consideration. This passage also has implications for the way the text itself is framed, by complicating the word 'Utopia' itself. The most popular interpretation of 'Utopia' is 'no place' and is founded upon the presumption that the word is a doggerel amalgamation of the Greek words *ou* (οὐ, 'not') and *topos* (τόπος, 'place' from *tópos koinós*, and in the common place *topoi*). Close examination of the words

<sup>40</sup> Tracy, *Erasmus of the Low Countries*, p. 63.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas More, *Utopia*. trans. by Robert M. Adams, ed. by Robert M. Adams, 2 edn (London and New York: Norton Critical Editions, 1992), p. 82. All quotes taken from this edition unless otherwise noted. This is, of course, the same translator of *The Prince* used in this thesis. This seems helpful as the emphasis of this chapter is to compare the author's ideas and manner of delivery.

<sup>42</sup> In particular Plato's theory of ideal forms or Aristotle's theory of types and teleology.

complicates this interpretation, however. *Utopia* was written in Latin, and More, in the addendum, promotes reading the title in Latin: ‘Wherefore not Utopie, but rather rightly my name is Eutopie, a place of felicitie’ [*sic*]. In Latin ‘Eu’ indicates a positive, or affirmative, as in ‘good’ and ‘topos’ was used to refer to the context of classical Greek rhetoric where it means a standardised method of constructing or treating an argument, as in ‘topic’, ‘line of argument’ or ‘commonplace’. *Topoi*, in classical rhetoric, were the sources from which arguments were constructed, through which the relationships among ideas were delineated, as in ‘places to locate an object or concept’ — or, in other words, ‘a category’ as in ‘good *Second Intentions*’, as *topoi* may include such ideals as justice, nation or beauty. More would have presumably been aware of both connotations, and could reasonably have intended that both interpretations be read into the name. It is noticeable, however, that many current interpretations have neglected the Latinised translation of the title, which is more in keeping with the interpretation of the text suggested in this thesis as ‘a good argument’. When combining the Latin and Greek translations, in the manner by which the traditional ‘no place’ translation is reached, contra positioning the translations (which is an equally valid translation as the former) results in ‘counter argument’.<sup>43</sup> Given the intimate link between systematic education and governmental administration, it appears More wishes the reader to conclude that the administration(s) of Utopia were not systematised, but organic — and, by implication, that administration itself, and the presumed qualities required by individual administrators, are inevitable: ‘natural’ aspects of the established order (the ‘way things are meant to be’) rather than aspects of a fundamentally arbitrary system, which is itself just one of many alternatives. By attempting to challenge prevailing ideas by depicting Utopian education as so extremely different than the Grammar School system, More facilitated the entrenching of ‘naturally occurring’ characteristics embodied in the nameless individuals presumably administering Utopian society — and, through the text’s influence, instilling these notions into subsequent literature.

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<sup>43</sup> Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and Latin Middle Ages*. trans. by Willard R. Trask (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953), p. 80.

Utopia places restrictions upon any individual travelling without ‘taking a letter from the prince’, on pain of severe punishment.<sup>44</sup> The implication is that it is possible to verify these letters as genuine, that a record of these letters exists, and that forgery would be either extremely difficult or that the allocation of these letters is tightly controlled. Such a system would require a central administration to which Raphael does not refer, unless the entirety of the citizenship is implicated in its enforcement. On Raphael’s account, Utopian taxation is literally obscene (‘off scene’, in the sense that it is never referred to), other than that the population ‘obey all laws which control the distribution of vital goods, such as are the very substance of pleasure’, never taking into account famine, public works, rent-seeking behaviour or monopoly. Utopia also appears to be perfectly mapped: the ‘island of Utopia is in the middle just 200 miles broad [...] environed with land to the compass of about five hundred miles [...] There are 54 cities in the island, all large and well-built [...] The nearest lie at least 24 miles distance from one another [...] The jurisdiction of every city extends at least twenty miles’. Such mapping would presumably require extensive central planning and administration, yet no such administration is described or implied. More only indicates that such processes are in place; other such implications of state power, and the possibility of its perfect application, are integral to the reasoning to be found within both More and Machiavelli’s texts. Whether through More’s liberties with geographical constraints and natural resources, or Machiavelli’s assumption of perfect knowledge and commitment on behalf of a Prince, the authority this implication conveys to ‘their’ roles as administrators provides a basis for subsequent depictions of administrator characters, as we will see.

Like More in some respects, Machiavelli also neglects or evades fully exploring the logical implications of his arguments in favour of rhetorical impact. Machiavelli appears to address civil disobedience, but upon closer examination, his advice is a cursory illustration of civil disobedience rather than the ‘special note’ he proclaims it to be. Indeed, Machiavelli fails to provide any practical advice on the means by which to implement the ‘imitation’ he advises. Machiavelli describes how ‘the duke took over the Romagna as “civil disobedience had manifested as a direct result of a lack of abuses of power [...] he found it had been controlled by impotent masters,

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<sup>44</sup> More, *Utopia*, p. 44.



who instead of ruling their subjects had plundered them, and had given them more reason for strife than unity””.<sup>45</sup> Yet Machiavelli’s prescription is simply a continuation of positive law, but more skilfully wielded:

To establish peace and reduce the land to obedience, he decided good government was needed, and he named [...] a cruel and vigorous man, to whom he gave absolute powers.<sup>46</sup>

Machiavelli similarly describes how order was restored using positive law without illustrating the ways in which the duke’s proxy Messer Remirro de Orco’s methods of control differ from those of the prior rulers, only describing how in ‘short order this man pacified and unified the whole district, winning thereby great renown’. Once ‘the duke decided such excessive authority was no longer necessary’, Machiavelli describes how the duke had Orco ‘placed on the public square [...] in two pieces, with a piece of wood beside him and a bloody knife’.<sup>47</sup> Machiavelli focuses upon the intent of the duke, describing his reasoning as having ‘decided such excessive authority was no longer necessary’, that the duke ‘feared it might become odious’ and that this reasoning was ‘worthy of special note, and of imitation by others’.<sup>48</sup> However, Machiavelli does not elaborate how the duke gained the information required to gauge the level of dissatisfaction of the Romagna citizens (in north central Italy) with Orco, considering that between 10 December and 31 December, Cesare, intent on the conquest of Sinigaglia, travelled with his entire army. Furthermore, Cesare, facing a shortage of provisions, was required to purchase 30,000 bushels of wheat from Venice. Orco, who had been summoned from Pesaro by Cesare, arrived on 22 December and was arrested and charged with fraudulently selling the wheat for his personal profit.<sup>49</sup> The duke’s stated reasons for Orco’s execution, and Machiavelli’s explanation are therefore at odds, and the veracity of Machiavelli’s claims are cast further in doubt by his diplomatic report of 26

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<sup>45</sup> Machavelli, *The Prince*, p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*.p.21

<sup>47</sup> Machavelli, *The Prince*, p. 21.

<sup>48</sup> Machavelli, *The Prince*, p. 21.

<sup>49</sup> Rafael Sabatini, *The Life of Cesare Borgia* (London: Stanly Paul & Co., 2004), p. 369.

December which stated that ‘nobody is sure of the reason for his death’.<sup>50</sup> Thus is illustrated the point that both Machiavelli and More skirt over practical issues in order to construct their arguments. ‘Nobody’ implies that both citizens and Machiavelli’s fellow diplomats were ignorant of the reason for Orco’s death, in so far as, at the time, this knowledge would have had no way of being spread. It is highly unlikely, therefore, that Cesare would have possessed the foresight or constant stream of information which would have been required to exploit Cesare in the manner in which Machiavelli suggests. By implication we may infer that Machiavelli’s insight, a key component in his self-promotion of how useful a servant he would make should he be reinstated as a diplomat, is a rhetorical construction rather than any reflection of an actual capacity.

Machiavelli uses Orco’s execution to argue that positive power had been redeemed in the eyes of the population by the construction of a cosmetic ‘civil court in the middle of the province, with an excellent judge and a representative from each city’, and that by dissemination of the knowledge that ‘whatever cruelty had occurred had come, not from him, but from the brutal character of the minister’.<sup>51</sup> Who would enact the revisionist account of the rule (as coming from the ‘brutal character of the minister’), or who would establish the court and the judges, is left unspecified, but functionaries and implementers are implied, and required. Machiavelli therefore asserts that law only resides in the application of power (in that the only law is positive law) and all civil disobedience and civil action/rebellion arises out of a failure to properly implement positive law, as opposed to affronts to natural law, or abuses by institutions or of tradition. In this way, Machiavelli directly contradicts Cicero’s (via Marco’s) assertion of a natural law in the most literal sense:

I will, therefore, cite a few of the *legal maxims* that bear on this branch of laws. ‘Let all authorities be just, and let them be honestly obeyed by the people without hesitation. Let the magistrate restrain disobedience and sedition in citizens, by fine, imprisonment, and corporal chastisement. If there be an equal or greater power, and

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<sup>50</sup> Machavelli, *The Prince*, p. 85.

<sup>51</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 85.

the people think the adjudication unjust, let them lawfully appeal thereto. If the magistrate shall have decided, and past sentence illegally, let there be a public appeal in a higher Court respecting the penalty and fine imposed.’<sup>52</sup>

Whereas Cicero’s account of rhetoric depicts a mode of civil interaction in which all true interactions are a natural phenomena, any breaches of which would result inevitably in discord, both Machiavelli’s and More’s rhetorical arguments require the reader to assume that the underlying infrastructures of social dynamics are the result of the skilful application of the principles advocated. Greenblatt argues that More, in contrast to Machiavelli, depicts what is on the surface a cooperative society.<sup>53</sup> The Utopian sharing of resources and the camaraderie of the citizenry prevent the need for the cultivation of private property, and status is dissolved in strict uniformity. However, by never directly explaining how these occur, More does two things: firstly, he implies that the answer to achieving such a state lies within the practices he *does* outline in detail (thereby strengthening the satirical and rhetorical aspects of the text); secondly, More evades admitting his own (ubiquitous) ignorance of how the opposite state of affairs (of destitution, poverty and privilege) arose within England (especially as the traditional role of the king had been as a central leader in war and purveyor of social patronage rather than as an agent of economic redistribution). Occurrences where Machiavelli and More would be expected (in line with the logical flow of the narrative’s arguments) to provide instructions on how to systematically implement the underlying principles alluded to are, primarily due the skilful construction of the texts, evaded. Both authors continually guide the subject matter from arguments of instruction to arguments of demonstration of underlying principles, and it is in the application of these principles that the establishment of an administrative caste is implicitly required, yet remains, at this stage, undefined. This illusion of authority and competence, and the evasive techniques used to account for them, is however adopted by subsequent characterisations of administrators.

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<sup>52</sup> *The Political Works of Marcus Tullius Cicero: Comprising His Treatise on the Commonwealth; and His Treatise on the Laws.* trans. by Francis Barham, (London: Edmund Spettigue, 1841–42), II, p. 136.

<sup>53</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self Fashioning* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 43 -- 46.

As the argument of *The Prince* develops, Machiavelli begins to directly equate power with rhetoric. Machiavelli describes a Prince as needing to know ‘how to act like a beast’ and references Chiron the centaur.<sup>54</sup> From this, Machiavelli draws the conclusion that a Prince must ‘imitate both the fox and the lion’.<sup>55</sup> It is worth comparing, at this point, the account of political authority to be found in Cicero to which these words appear to be a direct response. Cicero argues (in *O Duties* I.13.41) that ‘fraud seems to belong to the cunning fox, force to lion’ and that both are bestial and ‘wrong’. While he evidently rejects such a position, Machiavelli’s description of a virtuous Prince in fact echoes Cicero’s description of rhetoric rather than his description of a ruler. Skinner reads Cicero as directly equating ‘rhetoric, the art of persuading, and politics, the art of ruling a city’, and has argued that bibliographical evidence strongly suggests the works of Cicero had a formative influence on Machiavelli.<sup>56</sup> Whereas Cicero describes the two types of conflict, debate and force, in terms for which ‘the former is the proper concern of a man, but the latter of beasts’,<sup>57</sup> and defines rhetoric as existing only within debate (and hence properly human), Machiavelli sees rhetoric as a discipline which applies equally to the realm of politics and thus to questions of ‘force’. Indeed, when taken in the context of Cicero’s description that ‘no cruelty can be expedient; for cruelty is most abhorrent to human nature, whose lead we ought to follow’, Machiavelli’s assertion that a Prince ‘must not mind incurring the charge of cruelty for the purpose of keeping his subjects united and confident’ is striking.<sup>58</sup> It is the skill in the deployment of cruelty, as with the skill in the deployment of cohesive or

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<sup>54</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 60.

<sup>55</sup> *The Political Works of Marcus Tullius Cicero: Comprising His Treatise on the Commonwealth; and His Treatise on the Laws*, p. 61.

<sup>56</sup> Quentin Skinner, "Machiavelli's *Discorsi* and the pre-humanist origins of republican ideas", *Machiavelli and Republicanism* ed. by Quentin Skinner, Gisela Block, and Maurizio Viroli (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1990), p. 119. Skinner quotes Cicero directly ('car se parleure ne fust cites ne seroit, ne nus establissemens de justice ne de humane compaignie'), which translates as 'Without language there can be no justice, no friendship, no humane community', from Book iii of Cicero's *De Officiis*. Skinner has described Livy and Cicero as Machiavelli's 'classical sources' (Quentin Skinner, "The idea of negative liberty: philosophical and historical perspectives", *Philosophy in History*, ed. by Richard Rorty, J. B. Schneewind, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 193.)

<sup>57</sup> *The Political Works of Marcus Tullius Cicero: Comprising His Treatise on the Commonwealth; and His Treatise on the Laws*, p. 61.

<sup>58</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 65.

manipulative argumentation, which is at the root of the persistent ambiguity concerning the ethical implications of *The Prince*.

In the *Discourses on Livy* — despite apparently reaching inconsistent conclusions to those of *The Prince* — Machiavelli's unstated major premise remains: that power enacted is synonymous with power perceived. Machiavelli approves Romulus' murder of his relatives as being good for wider society - 'reprehensible actions may be excused by their effects, and that when the effect is good, as it was in the case of Romulus, it always excuses the action'<sup>59</sup> - by equating a strong society with a strong ruler: 'a wise mind will never censure any one for taking any action, however extraordinary, which may be of service in the organising of a kingdom or the constituting of a republic'.<sup>60</sup> Machiavelli thus concludes that autocracy is a moral imperative, in that the 'sagacious legislator of a republic, therefore, whose object is to promote the public good, and not his private interests [...] should concentrate all authority in himself'.<sup>61</sup> It is for this reason that Skinner describes *The Prince* and the *Discourses on Livy* as sharing a common tradition of moral practice, with *The Prince* advising on Princely conduct and the *Discourses on Livy* providing a narrative for citizenry.<sup>62</sup> Machiavelli, as the author of both texts, is thus situated between the Prince and the citizen: an apologist to the citizen, and an advocate to the Prince. Yet in each scenario, Machiavelli is the representative of a mode of conduct which purports to originate from disinterested analysis, despite the inherent investment Machiavelli himself has in the adoption of his ideas, for, via this acceptance, he may achieve a return to a role within Florentine politics. This inherent investment, along with the fundamentally polemical nature of the text, appears — when viewed from a vantage point in which the state has become the primary mode of collective governance — as a manifestation of the very discourses Machiavelli helped to inspire.

Later readings of More and Machiavelli occur via (and apply) the very discourses of governance these texts contributed to creating in the first place. Discussing the

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<sup>59</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, p. 45.

<sup>60</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, p. 45.

<sup>61</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, p. 45.

<sup>62</sup> For more see *Machiavelli and Republicanism* ed. by Skinner, Block, and Viroli.

integral ambiguity of *The Prince*, Berlin, for example, describes how these ‘two incompatible moral worlds [...] in the minds of his readers’ are responsible for the ‘desperate efforts to interpret his [Machiavelli’s] doctrines away’,<sup>63</sup> repeating the multitude of labels which have been attached to Machiavelli (‘diabolist’, ‘shallow’, ‘patriot’, ‘mouth piece of truths’, ‘crypto-republican satirist’, ‘political technologist free from moral implications’), and concludes that this points to the ‘truth’ that ‘not all ultimate values are necessarily compatible with one another’.<sup>64</sup> The ‘ultimate values’ which Machiavelli allows to ‘incompatibly’ exist, and the absence of the will or expedience to express his ‘mind more broadly’, are however, I would suggest, a result of readers retrospectively projecting later concepts of administration, and more modern conceptualisations of the role of administrators, on to Machiavelli’s narrative, such that the root origins of this character of the administrator cease to be apparent. These values and truths are dependent upon the stylistic representations which convey the texts’ Princedom and Utopia, and which have become equated with the administrative character through subsequent authors. *Utopia* and *The Prince* employ the discipline of rhetoric to advocate pragmatic and humanist ideals, and it was this that strongly influenced future interpretations of authority, power, and the state, and in particular, how these concepts came to be expressed through characterisation.

‘Show the sun with a lantern | if it be diligently read and considered by you, you will learn my extreme desire that you should attain... greatness’: Adoptions and subversions

*The Prince* and *Utopia* have been subject to multiple interpretations and appropriations, further distancing the common perceptions of these works from what historical research would suggest could have been the intentions of the authors. Yet, far from diminishing the influence of these texts, their contentious nature has bestowed these texts with a resonance far beyond the remit of their original subject matter. The influence (if not the image) of the conspiratorial servant and the disinterested advocate is most strongly delineated in *The Prince* and *Utopia*, setting

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<sup>63</sup> Isaiah Berlin, ‘The Question of Machiavelli’, *New York Review of Books*, 17.7 (1971) (p. 62).

<sup>64</sup> Friedrich Engels, ‘Socialism: Utopian and Scientific’, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. by Robert C. Tucker, 2 edn (New York: WW Norton, 1978).

in place the modality of future depictions of institutional power by providing a common point of reference.

In this way, it was the effective influence of *The Prince*, rather than Machiavelli's political thought proper, that altered the tenor of subsequent political theory. Born around 1544, the diplomat Botero manipulates Machiavelli's text to provide a foil with which to argue in favour of a Christian foundation for states, and so to trumpet the ideas of Thomas Aquinas. However, Botero's theories of justice depended wholly upon the demands of political prudence as being crucial to all government, and then defined the essence of prudence as being that 'in the decisions made by princes, interest will always override every other argument'. As such, for Botero, a prince must be guided primarily by 'reason of state', and thus actions 'cannot be considered in the light of ordinary reason'.<sup>65</sup> Botero considerably influenced his peers, and Duke Maximilian of Bavaria, for instance, discussed *The Reason of State* with advisors. Machiavelli's *The Prince* provided a 'character', a 'straw man' target, for Botero to represent a particular concept of the state, and his ideas were taken literally, even when nominally disputed; they were taken as advice rather than as provocative statements. Machiavelli's main contributions to political theory (his concept of the lion-fox, his emphasis upon spectacle, and his transposition of heuristics into the political arena) were, it seems, only partly original. The morality of *The Prince*, given undue emphasis at its point of reception, is more cohesively read as a continuation of the guidance given by Xenophon in his *Cyrpaedia*.<sup>66</sup> In fact, first and foremost, *The Prince*, when read in a manner which incorporates an awareness of its intended audience and Machiavelli's entire body of work and biography, appears to have been intended to enter into debates concerning the relation of morality to power, the nature of power in relation to the individual will, and the role of spectacle in maintaining authority. The capacity to create spectacle, in practical terms, entails a system of facilitators and orchestrators — the administrators. The seamless manner in which Machiavelli accounts for this

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<sup>65</sup> W. R. Newll, 'Machiavelli and Xenophon on Princely Rule: A Double-Edged Encounter', *The Journal of Politics* (1988), pp. 108-30.

<sup>66</sup> See Xenophon, *Xenophon in Seven Volumes*. trans. by Walter Miller (Cambridge and London Harvard University Press, 1914). *The Prince* may also be read as an extended refutation or engagement with Xenophon's philosophy.

assistance *as a given* cements the place of the administrator in future conceptualisations of the state. Once the premise that the perception of power is required in order to maintain power is accepted, the trope of the administrator character gains a practical function. Literary representation bestows these qualities upon the functionaries of governance, thus furthering the illusion of power's omnipotence.

*The Prince* was not, however, immediately received. The significant lag before it proliferated, and the implications this wait has for the text's interpretation, is an effect made all the more palpable when read in conjunction with *Utopia*. Machiavelli's arguments, which imply his support for moral determinism — in that the morality of the ruler determines the well being of his/her subjects — are echoed in the writings of Erasmus, whose *Education of a Christian Prince*, which argued for leaders to act as moral exemplars, was immediately well received and widely acclaimed. Machiavelli's moral conceit is that a Prince may achieve material power as a consequence of self-actualisation, and that all external influences are the vicissitudes of fortune — a fortune which may be won over by further guile and individual assertion. *Fortuna* and *virtu* become mutually affective forces, both generated by the Prince and by external forces (as in the case of the *virtu* of another Prince). Machiavelli's reductive argument grants the Prince self-determination: luck, privilege, favour and power are the product of *virtu*, whilst conspiracy, treachery and disobedience are the result of *Fortuna*. Machiavelli's descriptions may be read as an apology for tyranny only in so far as its apology extends to the degree to which a Prince may directly affect the circumstances of the state, creating the illusion of an impossible level of omnipotence and competence considering the Prince's practical restraints. Such restrictions, of knowledge, economic resources, retribution and coercion, would effectively prevent any actual 'Prince' from being capable of following Machiavelli's advice.

The writings of Machiavelli and More are both, then, more acts of rhetoric than manifestos. As such, once removed from the intellectual debates with which their works were intended to interact, they become, like the administrator characters that follow, prisms through which critics are able to view their own circumstances. To Rousseau, for example, Machiavelli was ironically condemning the amoral state



administration he encountered, and he went so far as to call *The Prince* a ‘satire’<sup>67</sup> — reconciling the narrative tone with ‘the Machiavelli’ of the *Discourses on Livy* (in which Machiavelli proposes republican principles, and apparently anticipates Rousseau’s own ideas on Natural morality: ‘[that] we cannot thus change at will is due [...] to [...] the natural bent of our characters’).<sup>68</sup> This, for Rousseau, marked Machiavelli’s aim as being —in the later words of Gramsci — under ‘the pretext of advising kings [... to give] excellent advice to the people, Machiavelli’s *Prince* is the handbook of republicans’.<sup>69</sup> Yet, while Gramsci declared *The Prince* ‘an anthropomorphic symbol’ of the hegemony of the ‘collective will’, Mussolini was able to use Machiavelli’s works as the focus of a thesis heavily indebted to Ercole’s examination of Machiavelli’s vocabulary and manipulation of terms.<sup>70</sup>

*The Prince* and *Utopia* both provide a faithful depiction of, and effective metaphor for, the state’s requirement for an administrative caste to facilitate the self-perpetuating concept of a unified state, and the practical undertakings performed upon the authority of this entity. Machiavelli’s and More’s use of rhetoric, intended to maintain the argument’s force by circumventing questions of application or logistics, would unwittingly inspire, and perhaps contribute to, what Foucault described as ‘an extremely different type of rationality from that of the conception of Machiavelli’, the aim of which was ‘not to reinforce the power of the prince’, but ‘to reinforce the state itself’.<sup>71</sup> Machiavelli as the delineator of an implied state apparatus empowers the describer, and the described role, of the Prince’s agent as synonymous with the state itself and as the effective conduit of the forces he implies as underpinning the text’s content.

Machiavelli’s use of the concept of ‘the state’ supports a reading of his texts as individually constructed arguments crafted in accordance with the customs of

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<sup>67</sup> Niccolo Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, ed. by K. Paul (London: Trench & Co., 1883).

<sup>68</sup> Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*. trans. by G. D. H. Cole (London: Dent and Sons, 1923), p. 129.

<sup>69</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, ed. by Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), III, p. 129.

<sup>70</sup> F. Ercole, *La Politico Di Machiavelli* (Rome: Anonima Romana, 1926), p. 65.

<sup>71</sup> Michel Foucault, *Technologies of the Self*, ed. by Martin Luther H. Huck Gutman, and Patrick H. Hutton (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), p. 1.

rhetoric, and as such, suggests that his treatment of 'the state' may be correlated to his treatment of the administrator. Many commentators have experienced problems in interpreting his writings due to apparently conflicting assertions in his individual works. Yet this apparent conflict may be accounted for if his works are viewed as independent, each representing a rhetorical argument. (This means that they need to be read differently to those more modern standards by which a political thinker's body of work is usually judged: as consistently delineating, honing and defending a line of reasoning.) Machiavelli never explicitly defines a single conception of the state in his works, and, in his various writings, the state reoccurs primarily as a topic to be addressed in the course of his arguments. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli argues for the primacy of the state's interest above conventional morality, and suggests a Prince 'should not be too worried about incurring blame for any vice without which he would find it hard to save his state',<sup>72</sup> and that 'there's such a difference between the way we really live and the way we ought to live that the man who neglects the real to study the ideal will learn how to accomplish his ruin, not his salvation'.<sup>73</sup> This concept situates the state as being deserving of preservation to the extent of justifying immoral actions.

However, Machiavelli presents a similar argument in the *Discourses on Livy*, which places the very existence of a state above its system of governance or any single prince, placing kingdoms and republics on a par. Hence, Machiavelli writes, 'nor will a wise man ever reproach anyone for some illegal action that he might have undertaken to organise a kingdom or to constitute a republic', and suggests that for any immoral deed performed in the service of the state, 'while the act accuses him, the result excuses him'.<sup>74</sup>

It is not inconsistent therefore to read Machiavelli as fundamentally republican, and to argue that the arguments Machiavelli presents within *The Prince* ultimately further those sentiments displayed in the *Discourses on Livy*. In the latter, Machiavelli suggests that the nature of governance is a 'cycle'<sup>75</sup> which will move from a Prince to a republic in due course, and that this process is aided by having

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<sup>72</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 43.

<sup>73</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 42.

<sup>74</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, p. 45.

<sup>75</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, p. 26.

efficient princes ('rarely does it happen that a republic or a kingdom is organised well from the beginning ... unless it is organised by one man alone').<sup>76</sup> *Significantly, however, this reading would, perhaps, not be one Machiavelli himself would propose.* Machiavelli writes in his introduction to the *Discourses on Livy* that in presenting it to Niccolo Buondelmonti and Cosimo Rucallai he had 'deviated from the common custom of writers who usually address their works to some prince, and blinded by ambition and avarice, praise him for all his virtuous qualities'.<sup>77</sup> Contrast this introduction with that of *The Prince*, in which Machiavelli suggests that Lorenzo 'recognise my most earnest desire that you may achieve that summit of grandeur to which your happy destiny and your other capacities predestine you'.<sup>78</sup> This is immediately followed by an appeal for a return to favour, and a position in the Medici government: 'And if from that summit Your Magnificence will occasionally glance down at these humble places, you will recognise how unjustly I suffer the bitter and sustained malignity of fortune.'<sup>79</sup> Machiavelli appears therefore to use the concept of 'the state' as a variable to be depicted in keeping with each of his text's arguments — (presumably) to illustrate his potential value as a civil servant in *The Prince*, and the value of historical study in his *Discourses on Livy*. The state is therefore treated in the same manner Machiavelli treats administrators — as a way of shoring up his wider assertions.

More appears to have intended his *Utopia* to achieve the same ends but did so more overtly, and this clearer apparent intention may account for the differing treatment the two works received. The influence of Thomas More upon Shakespeare is typical of the manner in which *Utopia* has served more as source material than as an intellectual interlocutor for subsequent authors. The beginning of Anthony Munday's *Sir Thomas More* (written between 1592 and 1595) contained revisions by Shakespeare (about three pages of Munday's play provide the only surviving examples of his handwriting) in which Thomas More answers the grievances of rioters by claiming that foreigners spread disease through their foods. One of the rioters, John Lincoln, a broker, says, "[t]hey bring in strange roots, which is merely

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<sup>76</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, p. 45.

<sup>77</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, p. 13.

<sup>78</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 3.

<sup>79</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 3.

to the undoing of poor prentices [apprentices ...] These bastards of dung [...] have infected us, and it is our infection will make the city shake, which partly comes through the eating of turnips.”<sup>80</sup>

Shakespeare’s trivialisation of the complaints of the rioters appears to have been included in order to overcome the objections of the text’s potential censor, the Master of Revels, who was concerned about the possibility of the political motives of the rioters being portrayed sympathetically. With oratory and persuasion, More asserts that uprisings in defiance of the law offend the king, and therefore, through his representative, God himself.

... O desperate as you are,” More says, “wash your foul minds with tears, and those same hands that you like rebels lift against the peace lift up for peace. And your unreverent knees, make them your feet. ... [*sic*]

The character of More remonstrates and restores order, casting him as a wise and worthy public servant, but he does not refuse to implement power. Within Jacobean theatre tropes (including those of Shakespeare), character is often used as a microcosm of power with the capacity to generate spectacles, create misunderstanding, and spread propaganda. Shakespeare depicts More as overcoming the very real economic complaints of the tradesmen with an appeal to natural order.

Significantly, Shakespeare’s reduction of More’s work and character as a source of imagery and as a cultural reference point is more or less identical to his treatment of Machiavelli. His contemporary Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta* begins with a request to imagine the spirit of an Italian who had died in 1527:

think Machiavel is dead,  
Yet was his soul but flown beyond the Alps  
[...] To some perhaps my name is odious;  
But such as love me, guard me from their tongues,  
And let them know that I am Machiavel.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Martin Holmes, 'Evil May-Day, 1517: "The Story of a Riot"', *History Today*, 22.7-12 (1965), pp. 642-50 (p. 7).

Watson argues that ‘Machiavel’, when used as a descriptive term for a devious manipulator, arose simultaneously as Machiavelli’s name entered common parlance, citing Marlowe’s *Jew of Malta* and Shakespeare’s *Henry VI* (in York’s reference to Alencon as ‘that notorious Machiavel’) as evidence.<sup>82</sup> As such, he argues for a distinction between the character of the Machiavel, and the actual person and canon of Machiavelli.<sup>83</sup> Yet it is largely irrelevant whether or not Shakespeare had an intimate knowledge of Machiavelli’s writing, in so far as Shakespeare uses both Machiavelli and More as culturally recognisable icons amidst his own attempts to address social and political issues. Thus, for Shakespeare, it is More’s advocacy and Machiavelli’s amoral pragmatism which are of note — the ‘style’ of *Utopia* and *The Prince* rather than the substance.

More’s purported intention for *Utopia* was to serve as a thought experiment, and Machiavelli’s purported purpose for *The Prince* was as a handbook. A closer reading, one which incorporates the means by which the arguments within the texts are constructed, reveals a shared endeavour to study how contingent entities (traditions, institutions, corporations) ‘arise’ out of more fundamental entities — individual citizens, individual values, and moral impulses — and yet how both remain distinct, and capable of influencing each other (for instance, how a law may change moral attitudes, and morality influence changes in the law). Both Machiavelli and More provide accounts of the individual subject existing in relationship with society’s emergent supra-individual entities — the perspective of a Prince viewing the institution of the Church, or a citizen within Utopia viewing a visiting diplomat, for instance — whilst maintaining an objective distance which allows the reader to assess formative motivations, experiences and incentives. Subsequently, the necessities of the role are continued within Jacobean theatre, as themes of governance and individuality are taken up and explored within drama — and therefore come to incorporate the role and prototypical character of the administrator in a far more concrete and individualized form.

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<sup>81</sup> *The Jew of Malta* ed. by H. S. Bennett (New York: Gordian Press, 1966), p. 62.

<sup>82</sup> George Watson, ‘Machiavel and Machiavelli’, *The Sewanee Review*, 84.4 (1976), pp. 630-48.

<sup>83</sup> Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self Fashioning*, p. 32.

*Utopia* and *The Prince* have become universal touchstones for political and social theory. Re-readings which effectively bring the rules of another mode of discourse to bare upon a rhetorical argument, and which interpret, for example, Machiavelli's propositions within a moral context, incorporate, however, the presumption that there are alternatives to spectacle and self-fashioning, and are effectively a retrospective imposition of later administrative systems and institutions upon the text. Machiavelli stated in his *Discourses on Livy* (1.xi) that no one 'could give unusual laws to his people without recourse to God, for otherwise such laws would not have been accepted'.<sup>84</sup> Machiavelli does not directly state this case in *The Prince*, allowing instead his exemplar, Moses, to imply it. In fact, Machiavelli evades questions of a 'right' to rule (be that moral authority, inherited title, or a democratic mandate) by clearly suggesting that the ability to rule is justification enough. Thomas M. Greene's reading of Machiavelli's text describes this as 'a disturbing gap between example and precept', to the extent that Machiavelli's narrative avoids moral concerns even as he addresses subjects traditionally embedded with morality, such as leadership, legality and justice. Precisely because he writes under the pretence of offering a disinterested manual of governance, Machiavelli strengthens the effectiveness of his 'exhortation' to Lorenzo to 'take up this task' of making Italy 'noble again'.<sup>85</sup> Machiavelli also skirts around issues of practical implementation of the Prince's authority outside of displays of power and spectacle. In a very real sense, *The Prince* is a guide to maintaining the illusions of dominance and competence. As such, the presence of a structure or machinery to proliferate laws, co-ordinate the logistical demands of state intervention, or to facilitate the Prince's wishes, is taken for granted in two ways. Firstly, the feudal aspects of Machiavelli's immediate social structure, which incorporated the *amici*, entailed that the individual perceived to hold the most privilege would receive tribute in return for patronage and, as a direct consequence, would have at his disposal the *amici*'s own servants and clients to enforce his will. Secondly, subsequent readings of *The Prince* have assumed (in Machiavelli's assumption of the determinative abilities of a ruler) that the practical means by which power proliferates and is generated (through discourse, bio-power, the monopolisation of violence and of the

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<sup>84</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on Livy*, p. 52.

<sup>85</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*. And, Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*.p.72

means of production and the compendium of property rights and the enforceability of contract law) must have a means of actualisation to such an extent that the manifestation of power becomes mistaken for its means. *The Prince* is therefore read as a handbook of tyranny, or a manual for the implementation of power (which is only achievable through the recruitment or co-option of institutions or the creation of organisations), rather than as a manual for its attainment and retention (a very different notion altogether).

### Conclusions

In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, Greenblatt describes More's 'constant recourse in his writing to the hypothetical' as indicating a 'dream of cancellation of identity itself, an end to all improvisation, an escape from narrative'; More becomes the fashioner of his own life, a life '*composed, made up*' yet which is simultaneously 'the source of much that is delightful, inventive, and energetic' in More's writing.<sup>86</sup> Greenblatt seems to view this emphasis upon the hypothetical as a manifestation of an internalising of an alienated state in More, whilst Edward Berry reads More's employment of the hypothetical 'as self-realization'.<sup>87</sup> Both of these readings — alienation verses realisation — posit the hypothesis that More intended to position his readers to be receptive, to fulfil the role of judge or jury, of his hypothetical scenarios. If one reads More's *Utopia* as an exercise, however, it may be read as a form of collaborative 'moot' in which the reader is invited to actively engage in the hypothetical Utopia, and More may be seen as fulfilling the role of 'the positor'. More may be read, in this way, as setting the scene, describing the key players, outlining the scenarios, and laying out the evidence (the Utopian society) in a manner akin to a 'moot' point.

More's influence, as with Machiavelli's within *The Prince*, is felt overtly by the reader in every line. The reader of both texts is made to feel directly addressed and implicated within the themes and issues raised. Both More and Machiavelli fulfil the role of 'go between' for the reader and the deeper conceptual ideals the texts aspire to. As previously argued, this mode of writing may be read as effectively an extension or continuation of the humanist application of classical rhetoric (as is the

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<sup>86</sup> Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self Fashioning*, p. 32.

<sup>87</sup> Edward Berry, 'Thomas More and the Legal Imagination', *Studies in Philology*, 106.3 (2009), pp. 316-40.

practice of the ‘moot’), which increasingly became the accepted language of the emerging institutions of the administrations of the ‘establishment’. Both More’s and Machiavelli’s texts achieve this effect in an exemplary fashion, to the extent that these texts come to constitute a collective reference point for the later portrayal of characters which serve as a conduit between forces outside the direct remit of the plot, but which the author wants to represent as influencing the narrative. This mode of characterisation, under specific circumstances and in response to specific influences, becomes that of the specific individual administrator character.

Machiavelli and More used the Renaissance’s pseudo-classical rhetoric as a frame of reference and a tool — Machiavelli to interrogate political incentives, and More to analyse customs and behaviour. The consequence of this use of rhetoric was that the authors’ own opinions were hidden behind layers of provocation and inference. The influence of these two works for future political theory and practice spanned the whole of Europe, and eventually, much of the rest of the world. Consequently, disinterest and ambiguity became accepted as the surface attributes of those individuals in literary works who are both the agent of a higher authority and whose motives and veracity are uncertain. Both Machiavelli and More, and the characters they portray, have vested interests in their interpretation of the state being accepted and could expect to benefit greatly from the patronage of the powerful, and from the status an adoption of their ideas would potentially bring. The influence of both *The Prince* and *Utopia* in this regard was increased rather than diminished by the multiple misinterpretations and appropriations of these texts. Thus, the impression of a caste of individuals whose perspective upon the world does not distinguish between argumentation and fact, effectively viewing agency and patronage as synonymous, was created. That it became universally accepted that More and Machiavelli wrote to advance their own agendas (an effect compounded by the level of disagreement as to just what these were) captured the fine line between whether power is something *conferred* or something acquired through *dependence*. This ambiguity raised the question in political theory as to where real power lies — in the master, who is dependent upon the servants, or the servants upon which the master depends? In the schema presented by Machiavelli and More, rulers acquire their power through acquiescence and tacit acceptance, and thus depend upon their administrators. It also raised awareness that it is in the interest of rulers to have their



administrators appear to be as competent and empowered as possible. Even Machiavelli himself couches this proposition in a manner which appeals to a prospective ruler, arguing that by empowering one's servants it is possible to defer blame upon them for unpopular actions. In this way, More and Machiavelli influenced the very syntax of the cultural debate concerning the power dynamics of Europe's institutions - a syntax which permeates the work of future authors and forms the foundations for future literary depictions of administrator characters.

### **Shakespeare and the characterisation of the administrative voice**

*'A feast of language [...] if to do were as easy as to know what were good to do'*

This chapter examines three of the characters Shakespeare uses to mediate external influences upon events depicted in the text – Puck, Ariel and Balthazar – and examines how Shakespeare incorporates external influences into the fabric of the play. Using the administrator character, I want to argue, Shakespeare both takes up the techniques of earlier Renaissance authors (exemplified by Machiavelli and More) and develops them in a variety of innovative ways. Shakespeare expanded the range of the administrative voice by embodying it in characters who overtly, and knowingly, incorporate differing interpretations of power relations. Shakespeare weaves these interpretations into the fabric of his characters, as in those conceptions of natural law and pagan tradition examined through the character of Puck in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or reason and the will to power explored via Ariel in *The Tempest*. This is not to presume that Shakespeare was necessarily uncritical of dominant interpretations and conceptions of power. It is certainly the case that Shakespeare incorporates in his administrator characters the power of the wider 'reality' of the drama and interrogates these interpretations through the different characters' interactions. His administrator characters thereby frequently have both their authenticity (in relation to the power they uncritically purport to represent) and potency questioned in the plays.

Through the use of fantastical settings, Shakespeare seems to be attempting, in a number of his most famous plays, to make the ubiquitous social relations of a contemporary Renaissance audience unfamiliar, so providing a means of interrogating these relationships. *Love's Labour's Lost* (c.1594–96), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c.1594–96), *The Merchant of Venice* (c.1596–97), and *The Tempest* (c.1610) share the distinction (rare within Shakespeare's works) of appearing to lack

a 'source' text.<sup>88</sup> Unlike many of Shakespeare's plays, these are not artistic 're-tellings' or 'literary turns' in the classical tradition, where the merit is to be found in the art of rewriting rather than the novelty of invention (as is the case in, for example, *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*).<sup>89</sup> Instead, these plays are unified by the theme of social relations, imaginatively transformed to place Tudor preoccupations concerning art and power within alternative settings.

The administrative 'voice' of rhetoric, applied to justify methodologies of governance, was exemplified, for the early modern period, in the works of Machiavelli and More, as we have seen, which allowed 'through legitimation the existing social order... [to be] 'naturalised', thus appearing to have the unalterable character of natural law'.<sup>90</sup> Arguably, this rhetoric is also adopted by Shakespeare, who, in the words of Tennenhouse, 'uses his drama to authorise political authority in such a way that political authority as he represents it, in turn authorises art'.<sup>91</sup> Read in this way, his texts thus become a means both to express a kind of artistic autonomy and to secure patronage.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, however, the concept of a

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<sup>88</sup> All of these plays were published simultaneously in the first known folio: William Shakespeare, 'Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies', ed. by J. Smithweeke, et al. (London: Printed at the charges of W. Jaggard, 1623).

<sup>89</sup> It is proposed that Shakespeare's immediate source for his story in *MacBeth* is Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (1577). See Josephine Nicoll Allardyce, *Holinshed's Chronicle as Used in Shakespeare's Plays* (London and New York: Dutton, 1963). Regarding *Hamlet*, it is proposed that the immediate source is Saxo Grammaticus, 'History of the Danes', in *Saxo Grammaticus and the Life of Hamlet*, trans. by de Belleforest, ed. by William F. Hansen (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1570), pp. 81-2. This text was adapted into a play by Thomas Kyd into the *Ur-Hamlet*.

<sup>90</sup> Dollimore's account of such 'legitimation' is comparable to both an Althusserian conception of ideology and the process of Mythology as outlined by Barthes. See Jonathan Dollimore, 'Shakespeare, cultural materialism and the new historicism', in Jonathan Dollimore, *Radical Tragedy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004). See also *Political Shakespeare*, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, 2 edn (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> Leonard Tennenhouse, 'Strategies of State and Political Plays', in *Political Shakespeare*, ed. by Alan Sinfield and Jonathan Dollimore (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 109-28 (p. 111).

<sup>92</sup> "...Cupid all arm'd: a certain aim he took | At a fair vestal throned by the west..." II.i of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is thought to refer directly to Elizabeth. Incidentally, *Love's Labour's Lost* was played before Elizabeth during the Christmas holidays on December 26, 1597. It is fair to suggest, therefore, that both plays were written with a direct consideration of how they would play before the Queen, and that this consideration will have affected the portrayal of both power and the means by which it is administrated. State papers record that Shakespeare played before the Queen in December, 1594, at the Royal Palace at Greenwich and subsequently received patronage through the Lord Chamberlain (to become known as the 'Lord Chamberlain's Men' prior to

self-perpetuating, central administration was informed by theatrical characterisations of the authorities' proxies themselves.<sup>93</sup> In this chapter, I will attempt to show how rhetoric is thus used in Shakespeare's texts to frame interpersonal power relations, and hence reflect upon the wider context of the world external to the text.

It is in this regard that, for example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* may be read as presenting a kind of 'manifesto' for the role of status and institutions as, possibly, the inspiration for the play's themes, with enough subversive elements (particularly concerning the dependence of power upon perception) to expose the fragility of royal power. Within each of the units of action in the play which raise these themes, Puck intervenes to impose Oberon's authority. Dramatically, it is therefore Puck's actions, and his interpretations of the will of Oberon, that drive the play's action. By acting on Oberon's behalf and acting as an intermediary between the mortal court and the fairy woods, Puck effectively endows Oberon with the attributes of royalty and natural law.

Similarly, in *The Tempest*, the source of Prospero's power alternates between his use of rhetoric and his deployment of Ariel, to such an extent that they appear to become different manifestations of the same force.<sup>94</sup> By representing the effect of the system

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becoming 'The King's Men'). For more on Shakespeare's patrons, see Henry Brown, *Shakespeare's Patrons* (Charleston: BiblioBazaar, 2009).

<sup>93</sup> Traditionally, Offices were sold as a means of accruing influence and status, resulting in sticky taxes incommensurate with inflation or with levels of wealth. The leaders of English villages and towns between 1388 and 1598 accepted responsibility for 'deserving' poor people, who might be offered Christian charity via private and, if necessary, collectively administrated assistance. Poverty was objectively mild in the century (due to the plague) but the numbers of poor increased during economic and demographic changes in later centuries due to an increasing population. Attempts by Queen Elizabeth to increase the size of English bureaucracy, small by continental standards, was defeated by the judges in the Cavendish Case in 1587 (for more, see G. W. Bernard, 'The Fall of Wolsey Reconsidered', *The Journal of British Studies*, 35.3 (1993), pp. 277-310 (p. 277). The Parliamentary motion to increase the number of legal offices was defeated. By 1594 to 1596, religious and political turmoil required Parliamentary legislation allocating the power to raise compulsory welfare taxes to local authorities, further decentralizing the government. The power of local nobility collectively far outweighed that of the central power of Westminster, via the structures of common law and monopoly taxation. As such, after the revolution, the King needed to maintain the support of the House of Commons by not challenging their local authority. For more, see Marjorie K. McIntosh, 'Local Responses to the Poor in Late Medieval and Tudor England', *Continuity and Change*, 3 (1988), pp. 209-45 (p. 209). Also see W. C. Richardson, 'Tudor Chamber Administration 1485-1547', *Columbia Law Review*, 53.7 (1953), pp. 1029-32 (p. 1029).

<sup>94</sup> Ariel acts as an extension of *amplificatio*, which Vickers notes are 'misunderstood in the modern sense of a decoration not functional to the overall aim...[T]he ornaments were associated with *amplificatio*, not in the

of subject and monarch upon the play, Prospero and Ariel reflect the role played by pomp and pageantry in the authority of the monarchy. Recently, *The Tempest* has been recognised as a play that, as Brown puts it, ‘bears the trace of the contemporary British investment in colonial expansion’ to the extent that critics have argued that *The Tempest* is ‘not simply a reflection of colonialist practices but an intervention in an ambivalent and even contradictory discourse’.<sup>95</sup> Certainly, during the 1600s, there was a distinct divergence between the ideal and the reality of colonialism, and the practical constraints upon aristocratic power. The administrator characters play a key role in ameliorating this ambivalent portrayal’s effects on the project of Empire. Critical interpretations of Prospero have shifted, in this regard, from readings of the 1950s, which emphasised his capacity for rejuvenation and social flexibility (as with Kermode’s seminal introduction to the 1954 Arden edition),<sup>96</sup> to post-1960s criticism which examines the power relations of the play as part of a wider colonial paradigm. Significantly, this latter interpretation has also opened the text to readings concerned with the role of other entities and agents within the play, and how these are subverted by, and subvert, Prospero’s influence. Such entities and agents have even included artistic, as well as epistemological, forms such as various analyses of the

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medieval sense of expanding discourse but in the classical-Renaissance sense of making it more intense and effective’, Brian Vickers, ‘Rhetoric and Poetics’, in Brian Vickers, ‘The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy’, in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. by Charles Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954) (p. 743).

<sup>95</sup> See Paul Brown, ‘This Thing of Darkness I Acknowledge Mine’: The *Tempest* and the Discourse of Colonialism’, in *Political Shakespeare*, ed. by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 48-71 (p. 48). Strong parallels have been drawn, and are evident, in Prospero’s final speech and Medea’s speech in *Metamorphoses*. The plot also contains similar anti-dogmatic themes to Erasmus’s *Naufragium* (see: Erasmus, *The Erasmus reader*, ed: Erika Rummel, University of Toronto Press, 2003, p.239) which clearly spoke to contemporary audiences, inspiring another shipwreck drama which Gil Vicente presented at the court of Dom Joao II in 1529 (see: M. Newitt, *A History of Portuguese Overseas Expansion 1400 – 1668*, Routledge, 2005, p.94); Peter Martyr’s narrative *De Orbe Novo decades cum Legatione Babylonica*, 1516, uses similar New World imagery with similar Spanish nomenclature (see: P. D’Anghiera, C. Lacona, E. George, *Columbus’ first voyage*, Bolchazy-Carducci Publishers, 2005). The first North American colony (1580) was named Verginia, after ‘the Virgin Queen’, Queen Elizabeth I, granted Sir Walter Raleigh permission to establish colonies in North America. The implied absolutism of this name contrasts with the realities of the project, as the first two attempts failed, with the third attempt only succeeding seven years later. Even so, the first child born of the colony was named ‘Virginia Dare’. See Marc Ferro, *Colonization: A Global History* (London and New York: Routledge 1997), p. 45.

<sup>96</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Frank Kermode (London and New York: The Arden Shakespeare Methuen, 1954).

representations of music<sup>97</sup> and geography<sup>98</sup> found within the play, in readings which owe much to the phenomenon that Vickers has referred to as treating the play as an ‘allegory for colonialism’.<sup>99</sup> However, both radical readings of the play (focusing upon subversion and resistance) and more conservative readings have neglected to address the question of how exactly characters implement an external authority’s will. In fact, Ariel and Prospero’s relationship is one which suggests, in particular, Plowden’s (1571) description of the King as having ‘two bodies, viz, a body natural, and a body politic | His body natural (if it be considered in itself) is a body moral [...] his body politic is a body that cannot be seen or handled, consisting of policy and government [...] and the management of the public weal’.<sup>100</sup> The figure of the administrator plays a vital role in the mediation of such two ‘bodies’ here.

In *The Merchant of Venice*, law is equated with religion, which the populace accepts due to the manner of its execution. Balthazar becomes the administrating representative of this external sense of law – law as higher truth – a sense of law that Balthazar is knowingly responsible for referencing. The trick that Portia successfully plays is not so much her disguise, nor does it lie in winning the battle of wits with Shylock. Portia’s achievement is in convincing the Court precisely that Balthazar is the agent of a higher law, and that it is the Court which is responsible for endeavouring to enforce it. Machiavelli described how ecclesiastical principalities ‘are maintained without either (ability or by fortune), for they are sustained by

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<sup>97</sup> For an overview see Catherine M. Dunn, ‘The Function of Music in Shakespeare’s Romances’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 20.4 (1969), pp. 391-405.

<sup>98</sup> For an overview see R. Levin, ‘Anatomical Geography in ‘the Tempest’’, *Notes and Queries*, 11.4 (1964), pp. 235-38.

<sup>99</sup> Brian Vickers, *Appropriating Shakespeare: Contemporary Critical Quarrels* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993). Vickers argues that texts must be read within their ‘proper’ place, in which theory may be applied within context, but not by transposing or telegraphing motivations or interpretations beyond those contemporary of intention and reception. Hamlin, 1994, summarises analysis aiming ‘to locate the play explicitly within the complicated network of ideas, preconceptions, goals, schemes, rhetoric, and propaganda that constitutes colonial discourse’ as ignoring the ‘genuinely curious’ tone of much of the source material. William Hamlin, ‘Men of Inde: Renaissance Ethnography and the Tempest’, *Shakespeare Studies* 22 (1994), pp. 15-44 (p. 14). The role of the administrator, as a spontaneous response to governance, is as authentic as this ‘genuinely curious’ element. I agree Shakespeare’s work may hold a dominant ‘articulatory principle’ which may be read, as Greer (1986) describes, ‘so influential that it has come to seem utterly conventional’. Germaine Greer, *Shakespeare: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 138.

<sup>100</sup> Edmund Plowden, ‘Les Comentaries on Reports De Edmund Plowden (1571)’, in *The King’s Two Bodies*, ed. by Ernst Kantorowicz (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 7-24 (p. 371).

ancient religious customs, which are of such power and of such quality, that they keep their princes in power in whatever manner they proceed and live'. These principalities are 'upheld by higher causes, which the human mind cannot attain', writes Machiavelli, and continues, 'I will abstain from speaking of them; for being exalted and maintained by God, it would be the work of a presumptuous and foolish man to discuss them.'<sup>101</sup> In line with this, Shakespeare's depiction and use of the administrator both reveals and affirms that the display of power is a means to acquiring power itself. This is so, arguably, in a manner reminiscent of Greenblatt's analysis of public executions, which is itself indebted to Foucault:

[T]he fear was to some degree pleasurable to the onlookers, whether, as Hobbes argued, because they delighted in not being themselves the victims or, as official spokes men claimed, because the horror was produced by a higher order whose interests it served. In either case, the experience, it was assumed, would make the viewers more obedient subjects.<sup>102</sup>

Greenblatt's analysis may be read alongside Shakespeare's depiction of the state, once proper attention is paid to the role of the administrator here. This is because the administrator character's very presence serves, in this sense, as an overt representative of the power relations of the wider political context and their impact upon the text. Within Shakespeare's plays, the state acknowledges the expediency of the law. By serving as a conduit for the influence of events and systems underpinning the action of the state, the administrators may thus be read as allowing the plays to simultaneously 'confirm the Machiavellian hypothesis that princely power originates in force and fraud even as they draw their audience toward an acceptance of that power'.<sup>103</sup>

Throughout the Shakespearean plays considered in this chapter, characters who dictate meaning are synonymous with high status, just as their intermediaries are synonymous with characters who interpret meaning. The characters of Sir Nathaniel and Holofernes – a curate (the 'curatus', or carer) and schoolmaster – serve the role of commenting on and analysing the letters of the characters in *Love's Labour's*

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<sup>101</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 39.

<sup>102</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 194.

<sup>103</sup> Greenblatt, *Shakespearean Negotiations*, p. 65.

*Lost*, encouraging the audience to adopt a reading which presumes a self-aware nature to the play in the manner of a play within the play, and emphasising the layers of meaning within every phrase ('I will look again on the intellect of the letter' IV. 2. 117). Puck interprets Oberon's wishes, and is the character who facilitates the encounter between the mechanicals, the lovers and the fairies, and it is Puck who closes the play with a direct plea for the audience to remember that the play was a fiction should they have not enjoyed it, again indicating the transient nature of certainty. In this way, Ariel (who embodies the rhetoric of Prospero) also stands in diametric opposition to Caliban in *The Tempest* (who wilfully rejects the rhetorical education Prospero offers) and is the means by which Prospero stalls the survivors of the tempest with an illusion of a banquet, and allows Ariel to lead them to Prospero and to the truth of his past (III. 3; V. 1). Finally, it is Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* who leads the suitors to be challenged in the attempt to find true value within her father's trial of the chests, and who deceives the Court in order to reveal the truth hidden within Shylock's contract (IV. 1). The role of the administrator in the interpretation and implementation of the wishes of the plays' main protagonists forms, in this way, the core of the over-arching representation of rhetoric and contested meaning within the texts.

It is crucial, then, that value within these plays appears to shift in increments from Platonic values, dependent upon transcendental worth, and embodied in such concepts as lineage, genius and beauty, as denoted within *Love Labour's Lost*, to an Aristotelian representation of value as the teleological achievement of value via cultivation of circumstance. Within these four Shakespearean plays, much of the drama thus arises out of the reassessment of an existing conception of value, and is often depicted as becoming increasingly pragmatic, as a matter of necessity for the plot to reach a conclusion. At the time of these texts's composition, views and practices of rhetoric fell into two broad streams. One popular conception was that of rhetorical arts as being a means to win an argument as an end in itself, regardless of one's purpose or the soundness of one's position – a view held by both those who affirmed the cynical use of rhetoric to specific ends, and by those who rejected the art as almost an extension of mendacity. As was seen in chapter one of this thesis, the latter was taken to be Plato's view. The second, in the manner of Aristotle's systematic treatment of argumentation and rhetoric, viewed rhetoric as a legitimate



subject in its own right, which held the potential to assist inductive reasoning to reveal deeper truths within debated subject matter. This latter interpretation was broadly adopted by classical Roman culture; although, as Mills has shown, aspects of distrust regarding rhetoric were also rediscovered during rhetoric's re-emergence in the European Renaissance.<sup>104</sup> In Shakespeare's case, rhetoric was used to reveal character. Shakespeare does this in three primary ways: by having his characters reveal their motives and opinions when arguing in favour of their goals; by allowing the audience to view his characters in discourse with other characters; and by depicting his characters adapting their behaviour and arguments in line with the other characters in the play.

*Love's Labour's Lost, A Midsummer Night's Dream and The Tempest*

*Love's Labour's Lost* has strongly humanist themes, comedy, and may be viewed as revolving around what Kirsty Cochrane describes as a form of 'speech ethics'. This is Cochrane's term for the Renaissance humanist ideal that speech maintains civil life,<sup>105</sup> the quest for public acclaim and social status. Rhetoric during the Renaissance was not perceived as distinct from the arts, politics, philosophy or even ethics.<sup>106</sup> In this sense, the concept of speech ethics pervades Shakespeare's literature, itself an exemplary representative of the role rhetoric plays in sixteenth-century European culture, in which, according to Renaissance sensibilities, human interaction (speech, in particular) should conform to courtly procedure and the rules of rhetoric in order to maintain civil society. This theme is explored in a number of humanist academic plays: the writings of Erasmus, and the work of Jonson, as well as the political theory of Machiavelli and More. The administrator, as the means by which authors indicate the influence of forces beyond the confines of the narrative, thus has a particularly important function within these texts. As with speech ethics, where a character's speech is the means by which the character's inner narrative is revealed to the audience and, at the same time, the means by which the audience is

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<sup>104</sup> Mills, 'Aspects of Distrust of Rhetoric'.

<sup>105</sup> 'Speech ethics' refers to 'the way in which a man speaks affects his relation with others: he is judged by his speech to the exclusion of almost any other consideration. His speech becomes his self, in an absolute fashion; and through it, civil life in society is seen to be created'. See Kirsty Cochrane, 'Sixteenth Century Theories of Effective Speech and Rhetoric and Their Manifestation in English Renaissance Drama', (PhD thesis University of Cambridge, 1970), p. 1.

<sup>106</sup> Vickers, 'The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy' (p. 715).

assured by the depiction of the maintenance of the fabric of civil society, the administrator indicates the influence of forces beyond the narrative – primarily, at this stage of the administrator character’s own development, through rhetoric. Miller argues that the situation of *Love’s Labour’s Lost* was a fiction based upon Elizabeth’s edict of 1561 to Archbishop Matthew Parker, given on one of her Summer Progressions through England, forbidding ‘all resort of women to the lodgings of Cathedrals or Colleges’. Therefore, the play may be read as a study (via the interactions of the characters), as Miller notes, of the ‘close relationship and interlocking leadership of the ecclesiastical and educational institutions [that] account for the Church and universities being brought together’ during this period – a representation, that is, of the friction between the Church as educator and the Church as the leader of the congregation in the sixteenth century. Read as such, the play, as a whole, may thus be seen as examining larger social relationships between institutions, and the influence of individual actions upon these institutions.<sup>107</sup>

Moving from the interpersonal to the interplay between institutions and the interpersonal, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (‘Ere the leviathan can swim a league’ II. 1) anticipates a central theme within Hobbes’ *Leviathan*, of how one person may act on behalf of another. In Hobbes’s words: ‘A Person, is he, whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of any other man, or any other thing to whom they are attributed, whether Truly or by Fiction.’<sup>108</sup> This tension is explored in the depiction of Puck, and the ambiguity regarding Puck’s motivations: whether he acts on behalf of Oberon, out of self-interest, or on behalf of a greater meta-order that he himself is unaware of, in his attempts to reunite Oberon and Titania and unite the lovers. By contrast, *The Tempest* interrogates contemporary myths surrounding colonialism and aristocracy, so exploring the relationship between nature and artifice. In this, it shares a concern with, for example, Montaigne who posits that ‘In those (Indigenous Americans) are the true and most profitable virtues, and natural properties most lively and vigorous, which in these we have bastardized, applying them to the pleasure of our corrupted

<sup>107</sup> See R. L. Miller, ‘Oaths Forsworn in Love’s Labour’s Lost’, *The Oxfordian*, 9 (2006), pp. 35–49.

<sup>108</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. by Aloysius Martinich and Brian Battiste, 2 edn (Plymouth: Broadview Press, 2005), p. 120.

taste'.<sup>109</sup> This entails, then, an account of the means by which property becomes both a physical and social extension of status, and, subsequently, power. Finally, it is within *The Merchant of Venice* that the administrative character's capacity to act as a prism for the wider ideological context of the text is most apparent when seen as part of a series of plays exploring the tension between the individual and the state. In the depiction of Portia, in particular, the failure of the humanist paradigm (in which the human is locatable within the individual empowered with learning and skill) is depicted as an ideological conceit, sacrificed pragmatically on the path to personal gratification.

Humanist rhetoric, as a device to iterate meaning (and, through its iteration, to adopt and propagate), is rooted in what H.F. Plett terms 'the use of rhetoric as an interdisciplinary, intercultural discipline of the humanities'.<sup>110</sup> This is an idea classically addressed in Aristotle's *Poetics*, where he emphasises the manner of the tale's telling, rather than its content:

Concerning Thought, we may assume what is said in the Rhetoric [...] incidents should speak for themselves without verbal exposition; while the effects aimed at in speech should be produced by the speaker, and as a result of the speech.<sup>111</sup>

This notion arguably motivates the 'variations on a theme' in Shakespeare's texts: the 'utopia', the 'manual to rule' text, the 'tragic prince', the 'corrupt tyrant', the 'star crossed lovers' (to suggest a few). The content here – the matter, if not the narrative – provides a foundation for rhetorical flourishes. Rainolde (1563) described the Aristotelian essence of eloquence as the ability to 'copiouslie dilate any matter or sentence, by pleasantness and sweetness of [...] wittie and ingenious oration', which,

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<sup>109</sup> Montaigne's *Essays*, trans; John Florio, cit: Frank Kermode's intro. to William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, ed. by Frank Kermode (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1988), p. 7.

<sup>110</sup> H. F. Plett, *Rhetoric and Renaissance Culture* (Berlin: Library of Congress, 2004), p. 7.

<sup>111</sup> Aristotle, *The Poetics*, ed. by S. H. Butcher, 4th Edn (London: Macmillan, 1925), p. 71. Baldwin outlines the rhetorical training in English schools and universities, including *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, Cicero's *Topica*, Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, Erasmus' *De Copia*, and Susenbrotus' epitome of schemes and tropes. For more, see T. W. Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Less Greek* (Illinois: University of Illinois Rare Book and Special Collections Library, 1944), II, in *University of Illinois Press Rare Book and Special Collections Library* (University of Illinois ). See also George Puttenham, *The Art of English Poesie*, Cambridge, 1936 intended

when used for the betterment of mankind, was an ‘absolute excellencie’, and ‘a thing of all most noble and excellent’.<sup>112</sup> Shakespeare, when he moves beyond these story formats, uses archetypes to illustrate and embody the themes and ideas explored within the play. To this extent, concepts take precedence over traditional theatrical aesthetic and material concerns.<sup>113</sup> Shakespeare’s use of character allows him to maintain the dramatic tension without resorting to plot devices, in a manner reminiscent of Aristotle’s famous assertion in the *Poetics*:

[P]oetry tends to express the universal [...] how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages.<sup>114</sup>

It is, I would claim, in this fashion that *Love’s Labour’s Lost* examines the power of rhetoric to convey the humanist ideal and essential (Aristotelian) virtue.<sup>115</sup> In this sense, it may also be seen as part of a trilogy with *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *The Tempest*, despite the decade and a half which apparently separated their composition. These three plays share, at any rate, an equal concern with the conveyance of the humanist goal, yet each places differing emphases upon the sphere of influence of rhetoric, and upon the extent of its ramifications. *Love’s Labour’s Lost* concentrates upon the internal and the intimate, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* focuses upon the overlap between these intimate conspiracies and the state, while *The Tempest* foregrounds the wider social structures, such as colonialism, monarchy, cultural ideology, and class relations, and how these are affected and, in turn, affect the internal consciousness of the characters. Where *Love’s Labour’s Lost*

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<sup>112</sup> Richard Rainolde, *The Foundation of Rhetoric* (Menston: Scholar Press, 1972), pp. 160, 62, 267.

<sup>113</sup> Robert Uphas, suggests a similar reading of Shakespeare’s relationship with Aristotelian / Theophrastus suggesting that the characters of Pericles, Cerimon and Gower act as archetypes, for patience, charity and the story-teller respectively. See T. Curtright, ‘Falseness Cannot Come from Thee’, *Literary Imagination*, 11 (2009), pp. 99-110 (pp. 99 - 110).

<sup>114</sup> Aristotle encompasses probability within this comment as well as universality. Aristotle, *The Poetics*, p. 71.

<sup>115</sup> In 1528 Baldassar Castiglione printed a conduct book describing the ideal courtier as being able ‘to avoid affectation, to speak and act discreetly and opportunely, to aim at honour and praise in martial exercises, war, and public contests’; *Il libro del cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*) later translated and printed in English by Hoby in 1561: Baldassarre Castiglione (conte), *The Book of the Courtier*, Trans: , Leonard Eckstein Opdycke C. Scribner’s Sons, 1903. For more on the character of the Pedant, see Sidney Logan Sondergard, ‘Pedagogy and the Sign of the Pedant in Tudor England’, *Studies in Philology*, 91.3 (1994), 270-82.

focuses upon personal interaction and occurs in closed spaces, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is a comedy-drama study of manners, and *The Tempest* spans oceans, cultures, and generations. As an extension of the text's rhetoric, characterisation expands correspondingly. It is enough for the characters in *Love's Labour's Lost* to have the bearing of the courtier in order to convey the theme of the humanist ideal, but in-depth characterisation is required to represent traditions of *noblesse oblige*.<sup>116</sup> Subsequently, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merchant of Venice*, and *The Tempest* require increasingly clear archetypal structures to frame their characterisations.<sup>117</sup>

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, characterisation may be read as facilitating the play's meta-rhetorical theme, placing in question the validity of rhetoric *per se*, and examining the potential influence of court dynamics and intrigue upon the state. Puck is central to *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'s 'philosophical' thrust: the interplay between localised communities, how their interrelations are affected by forces beyond the control of any one group or individual (no matter their social status), and the inability of established ideals of humanism to address them. Puck's fay nature, as with Marlowe's Mephistopheles in *Doctor Faustus*, may be read, in this light, as reflecting the 'supernatural' status which the emergent forces of modernity held at the turn from the sixteenth to seventeenth century. Prior to Shakespeare's retelling, Puck was described as a 'hobgoblin' with a fickle, ambiguous morality.<sup>118</sup> In *A*

<sup>116</sup> *Love's Labour's Lost*'s treatment of the relationship between language and civil life has many similarities with the 'academic comedies'. Holofernes and Sir Nathaniel appear to mirror Pedantius and Dromodtus of the Cambridge play *Pedantius* – Edward Fossett, *Pedantus*, Produced at Trinity College Cambridge in 1581. See also: Aristophanes *The Clouds* (for Classical context, see the portrayal of Socrates); Edward Forsett: *Pedantius*, ed. by Edward Forest, J. W. Binns, and Marvin Spevack (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1989), II, p. 104.

<sup>117</sup> For more on the use of archetypal characters and the humanist rhetorical tradition of which Erasmus and Wilson were standard bearers, see T. Campion, *Observations in the Art of English Poesie*, (1602) in Smith's *Elizabethan Critical Essays*, II, 327. See also Daniel's counter to Campion, *A Defence of Rhyme*, (libd., II, 372); and W. Guazzo, *The Civil Conversation*, owned by Gabriel Harvey (located in the British Museum. Harvey heavily annotated this text, with particular emphasis on manners and discourse and Book IV); Harvey dated this copy 1582 on P.115. The earliest usage of 'humanist' is noted by the *O.E.D* as 'a public or private teacher of classical literature' – cited: Baldwin, *William Shakespeare's Small Latine and Less Greeke*, p. 478. For more on Shakespeare's humanist education see A. P. Duhamel, 'The Function of Rhetoric as Effective Expression', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 10.3 (1949), pp. 344-56 (p. 355). Also Ricardo J. Quinones, 'The Renaissance Discovery of Time', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 27.1 (1974), pp. 7-28 (p. 55).

<sup>118</sup> Reginald Scot, *the Discoverie of Witchcraft 1584*, ed. by Montague Summers (London: John Rodker, 1930), p. 89.

*Midsummer Night's Dream*, however, Puck, even while taking delight in confusion and his understanding of the fairies, is, above all, an obedient emissary for Oberon's will. The Shakespearean Puck is therefore *dependant* on the Shakespearean Oberon in what appears to have been a radically new way. Oberon represents the majesty of monarchy, just as the mechanicals represent an idealised artisanal class. The mechanicals' noun-focused, harshly punctuated language cut with colloquial interjections, their 'hempen homespuns' appearance, and their amorphous characteristics demand less interpretation by the audience. Bottom, who can play all of the characters in *Pyrimus and Thisby*, may, in this sense, be taken as an 'arch-type' character, representative of all the members of the mechanicals, and, by logical extension, of the whole artisanal class.<sup>119</sup> Their preoccupation with their own internal dynamics also suggests an ignorance of the influence of external forces upon their actions, and upon the events surrounding them, suggesting that they will, themselves, ultimately only have a minor influence upon the contextual 'wider reality' (or verisimilitude) of the play. At the same time, the ability of Puck to make an ass of Bottom, and make the Queen fall in love with him, has an economically satirical edge – once again, Puck embodies the binary nature of administration in its capacity to influence the ruler and the ruled in equal measure.

Oberon represents the detached comprehension that systems of privilege and power have on social consciousness, describing the tension between social change and the continuity or ongoing legacy of traditional institutions. He is the 'prime mover', who is never encountered by any of the mortals in the play, and may, significantly, become invisible at will. In this way, Oberon represents the influence of social change and tradition as an entity 'in the world', yet not 'of the world'. He relies upon his knowledge of the natural world to gain control over Titania (his 'little western flower; | Before, milk-white; now purple with love's wound' II. 1. 173), and upon his agent to enact his plan. In her aria on the seasons, Titania speaks of winds made angry by neglect and disregard, suggesting that the powers the fairies possess are not

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<sup>119</sup> The English government passed the Weavers' Act in 1555, limiting the number of looms per establishment outside towns to one or two. These sped the decay of the old urban broadcloth firms. Queen Elizabeth nationalised the Statute of Artificers in 1563, providing state support to guild power. Had the Statute of Artificers been enforced, industrial growth might have been permanently arrested. For more see: Murray Rothbard and Harry A. Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe: 1460-1600* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

the same as direct control. The power of the Fairy King and Queen may therefore be described as the power of discourse represented as the power of symbolic status and empowered language. Oberon and Titania are the embodiment of powers greater than their ability to wield them. These unruly powers encapsulate the conundrum of how monarchy, theocracy, and entitlement are to persist in a changing world.

The implied message of the fay's depiction in this reading would be the need for institutional administration and mediation, represented by Puck. Puck is a magnetic conflagration of impartiality and moral abdication, combined with impulsiveness and impropriety. As such, Puck is the primary means by which the symbolic power of the fay may adapt to the material resources of the lovers and the Court. The translation between the essential fay and the material lovers here becomes the task of the administrator, and is identical in this instance to the role of rhetorician. As future chapters will show in more detail, this dynamic constitutes a primary default source for subsequent images of the administrator character in literature: a representative of a force distinct from the institution's rulers whilst remaining bound to them. If the play represents a form of mediation in the 'in between' space of the midsummer wood, this duality requires a proactive intermediary who must have the ability to interact with each social class. Puck characterises the apex between the invisible, non-temporal discourse of Oberon and the physical temporality of Athens and the 'visible' wood. As a result, Puck's language ranges from blank verse<sup>120</sup> and the trochaic tetrameter of rhyming couplets, to rhyming pentameters<sup>121</sup> in accordance with his 'location'. Puck even uses a rhetorical inversion against Oberon by turning accusations of 'misprision' of 'some true love turned, and not a false turned true', a mistake instigated by Oberon, into a universal generalisation, as 'fate o'er rules, that, one man holding troth, a million fail, confounding oath on oath' (III.2 92).<sup>122</sup> This elegant evasion of blame doesn't divert responsibility onto Oberon, however, but appears to agree with him due to his apparently innocent misinterpretation. Such apparently innate rhetorical ability may be seen as the source of Puck's influence and indeterminate status. It is Puck, the administrator character, who is the unifying point between the different linguistic registers and poetic forms used within the play,

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<sup>120</sup> See Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. Act III.i.

<sup>121</sup> See Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. Act III.ii.

<sup>122</sup> See Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. Act III.ii.

allowing Puck to act as the embodiment of discourse *tout court*, as seen in Shakespeare's use of Puck's mimicry and Puck's eventual combining of styles. This allows Shakespeare to endow this character (who remains, in terms of courtly status, a cipher) with the empowered language, hegemonic knowledge, and moral impartiality required to drive the drama.<sup>123</sup> The language of Puck is less demonstrative than the speech ethics of *Love's Labour's Lost*, but it may be read, in this way, as a microcosm of the wider rhetoric of the play's themes. Indeed, Puck's closing speech may even be read as a manifesto of personal empowerment through hegemonic discourse, extolling the role of the administrator, being 'so strong that previous goals have become incommensurate', and his continued agency in the world, and, as such, invokes a sense of the modern, the immediate and impermanent by referencing death 'howling' within 'this weak and idle theme | No more yielding but a dream'.<sup>124</sup>

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the emphasis appears, then, to be on the interaction between the different strata of society. In *The Tempest*, the true 'currency' of the island is ideological. *The Tempest*, however, also explores the ramifications of shifting power structures upon interpersonal social relations. This is achieved through the characters' interpersonal rhetoric and the play's drama arc. In *The Tempest*, rhetoric acts as a barometer of the will to power, and therefore rhetoric is extrapolated by will and force of reason into discourse rather than just the power of class; it is Ariel, as the administrator character of the play, who serves as the conduit between rhetorical discourse in the abstract and the power relations on stage. The dramatic role of Ariel differs from that of Puck in that Puck is a proactive figure, who interprets Oberon's orders. Yet Ariel lacks none of Puck's will and vitality, even going so far as to demand from Prospero 'My liberty'.<sup>125</sup> Just as the relationship between Puck and Oberon reflects the subject of the play's examination,<sup>126</sup> the relationship between Ariel and Prospero is presented in terms of

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<sup>123</sup> See Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. Act III.ii, incorporation of incantation and trochaic tetrameter in quatrains.

<sup>124</sup> William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Peter Hollindale (London: Penguin Critical Studies, 1992). Act V.i.

<sup>125</sup> Shakespeare, *The Tempest*. Act I.ii

<sup>126</sup> That is, how the rhetorical interrelations between individuals and small groups - depending upon their social status and their individual consciousness - ramify upon wider society. This is the meeting point between



utility rather than hierarchy. Their relationship represents discourse replacing rhetoric as the primary determinant in human interaction.

Ariel describes how it has performed ‘worthy service, [...] served without grudge or grumblings’, in order to ‘repay’ Prospero for freeing it from its ‘cloven pine’. Despite the verbal contract with which Prospero appeases Ariel, it is clear that Prospero’s power over Ariel surpasses that of an oral contract. Ariel makes no direct reference to magical compulsion (as Caliban does, saying ‘His art is of such power’),<sup>127</sup> traditional authority (as with Alonso: ‘Thy dukedom I resign and do entreat | thou pardon me my wrongs’),<sup>128</sup> or familial authority (as with Miranda’s ‘Obey, and be attentive’).<sup>129</sup> Indeed, the relationship between them appears intimate and familial, yet they are distanced from authentic interaction by the exploitative nature of their relationship.<sup>130</sup> This has an alienating effect on interpersonal relations, trumping the power of rhetoric. Ariel’s primary mode of being within the play is as a personification of ‘use-value’, and the impact of this is an enforced portrayal of detached inhumanity, which inadequately reflects the affection Shakespeare suggests between the two. Indeed, Prospero appears even to welcome Ariel’s freedom, referring to it throughout the play. Prospero’s affection for Ariel is, however, clearly contingent upon Ariel’s utility. Moreover, Prospero’s promise of freedom, as it comes within the context of his renouncing magic, costs him nothing. All of their interactions are therefore lacking any authentic emotional investment beyond the gratitude earned at a lack of punishment or the gratification provided by a tool. This inauthenticity may be seen as key to their dysfunctional dynamic, and its origins may be read as being within the administrator role that Ariel has within the play, as the representative of the rhetoric and pomp which is the apparent source of Prospero’s power.<sup>131</sup>

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individual consciousness and relationships, on the one hand, and wider cultural traditions, structures, discourses and hegemony, on the other.

<sup>127</sup> *Shakespeare, The Tempest*. Act 1.ii.

<sup>128</sup> *Shakespeare, The Tempest*. Act V.i.

<sup>129</sup> *Shakespeare, The Tempest*. Act 1.ii.

<sup>130</sup> Prospero’s adjectives for Ariel include ‘brave’, ‘slave’, ‘quaint’, ‘fine’, ‘dainty’ and ‘bird’. Ariel’s adjectives to these references include ‘noble’, ‘master’, ‘sir’, ‘lord’, ‘my commander’.

<sup>131</sup> ‘As my soul prompts it. Spirit, fine spirit, I’ll free thee/Within two days for this’ (1.ii p.21) and ‘I shall miss/Thee, but thou shalt have freedom’ (V.i, p.69)

Prospero is, in turn, himself confined within his relationship with Ariel. Ariel is complicit in the continuation of this master/slave relationship by promoting it in every encounter, evidenced in a continual and insistent use of subservient language. Prospero's description of Ariel as 'my diligence', and his reliance upon Ariel to summon the storm (which he claims credit for to Miranda), and to create the illusion which waylays Alonso and his retinue (presenting himself on cue during Gonzalo's impeachment to 'some heavenly power guide us | out of this fearful country' V. 1. 114), suggest that the nature of his 'art' – the power it contains – is in actuality his power over Ariel. This power relies upon his ability to defeat Ariel's rhetoric by exploiting Ariel's internalisation of use-value. As this dictates their (Prospero and Ariel's) interpersonal relations, Prospero is therefore an image of authority (a 'Prince of power' I.1. 62), adapting to an age in which traditional discourses of power are surrendering influence to commerce. This may be seen in Prospero's use of props to indicate the semantic dialects he wishes to invoke (his cloak, his hat and rapier, and his wand, and his books). Prospero moves between hegemonic structures with but a scripted costume change. It is Ariel's role in the play to personify Prospero's influence. In this way, Ariel is, like Puck, a cipher. Unlike Puck, however, Ariel gains no emotional return or takes any conspiratorial glee from its actions. Prospero orders Ariel to 'fetch' his 'hat, and rapier' (V. 1. 84) in order to present '[a]s I was sometime Milan' (86), and thus influence his encounter with Gonzalo, and authenticate his claim that Gonzalo 'perforce' 'must restore' (133). The rapier is used repeatedly within the text as an image of rhetoric, alluding to the relationship between the discipline of fencing and the discipline of rhetoric. (Ferdinand describes how his past interactions were 'put [...] to the foil' and Stephano describes a verbal 'touché' as a 'pass of pate' III. 1. 46; 244.) For Prospero, the rejection of magic may be read as equating to an abandonment of rhetoric. As rhetoric was often viewed as a discipline capable of refining the individual Prospero effectively abandons this art in favour of a pragmatic use of costume and the customs of tocher (or dowry), which, in turn, may be read as representations of the iconographic power of nobility.

Ariel is the means by which Prospero determines the location of the play's units of action. Just as Prospero guides the location of the characters in time and space, he also manipulates their environments as a way to direct their objectives in accordance with his own super-objective or final goal. The play's super-objective is therefore

readable as being identical to Prospero's ends. To the extent that the interactions and social conflicts within the play are either instigated or dictated by Ariel, Ariel itself becomes the manifestation of Prospero's hegemony. That is to say, Ariel acts in the wilderness of the Isle as something like a substitute for the influence bestowed by commerce and a comprehensive infrastructure and the control of natural resources. Without these direct economic delineations of location, the characters are at a loss to categorise the land of the Isle. ('Here is everything advantageous to life' to Gonzalo, which to Antonio is 'True, save means to live'; *The Tempest*, II. 1. 50.) The characters thus find themselves dependent upon Prospero, who is himself dependent upon Ariel's being dependent on him.

Ariel, like Caliban, is subjugated by Prospero's rhetoric. By accepting the relationship dynamics that Prospero dictates, Ariel is, in a sense, complicit with these rules. Therefore, any difference between the subservient relationship with Prospero and Ariel's previous relationship with Sycorax is (in the truest sense) 'semantic' in the play.<sup>132</sup>

Part of my argument is, then, that *The Tempest* is the ultimate play in a series where speech ethics are used as a prism through which to analyse social power. This series retrospectively interrogates the development of the humanist project of rhetoric. Within *The Tempest*, oratory and rhetoric are represented as among the arsenal of tools recruited by individuals seeking to impose their will upon society. This portrayal is opposed to the alternative conception which appears to permeate *Love Labour's Lost*, and which is portrayed sympathetically within *A Midsummer Night's*

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<sup>132</sup> Ariel is the character least infused by the 'colonial' aspects of *The Tempest*. Kermode (1954) perceives a dichotomy within the play indicative of an exploration of art versus nature, a theme explicitly explored within the essays of Montaigne. The units of action informing this analysis primarily concern the concept of gardens as nature edited (and possibly its sully as a result). Kermode's continuation of this diametric reading of art versus nature to incorporate the depiction of rhetoric is informed by suggesting a deliberate partnering of the characters to reflect this dichotomy: 'Prospero is, therefore the representative of Art, as Caliban is of Nature... as a man he learns to temper his passions, an achievement essential to success in any... activities'. While this dichotomy is somewhat forced, even by this reading Ariel has no partner. Ariel remains the embodiment of rhetoric and representative of self-reflexive concerns within renaissance culture - and thus rhetoric acts as a prism through which to examine the methodology of governance within the text. Thus it is the character of Ariel who exemplifies the emergence of a conceptual merging within the European Renaissance, in which rhetoric and artifice combine within the concept of the character of the administrator. See Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, p. xlviii.

*Dream*. Within these earlier plays, rhetoric is portrayed in a manner consistent with the popular conception of rhetoric, as an art with esoteric undertones that has an internally, and subsequent external, edifying effect. By contrast, *The Tempest* appears to portray rhetoric as the language (and language as the principal tool) of the established, supraindividual order, and therefore the voice of the administrator. Rhetoric is thus the primary means by which hegemony is enforced; Ariel is the means by which it is articulated, and, as such, Ariel is *the* representative of hegemonic agency – its administrator.

How ‘Something which is given’ gains the power to ‘save the life of the King’<sup>133</sup>

In *The Merchant of Venice*, it is the administrating character of Portia who, disguised as Balthazar, bridges the gap between the role of the administrator serving the interests of an external power and the administrator protecting the institution of the state. Through the ‘character’ of Balthazar, Shakespeare extends the concept of speech ethics as an image of civil society to encompass the institutions of state and law by portraying them as dependent on civil speech. In all of the four plays examined in this chapter, speech represents the internal world of the characters and is their primary means to enact their will upon the world. The administrator characters within these plays serve to enhance the authority of a central authority figure by acting as their agent, enhancing their power and extending the influence of their rhetoric. Skinner has successfully traced and demonstrated the formal influence of Cicero and Cicerian rhetoric on Shakespeare's dramatization of interpersonal conflict and how its potential for dramatic tension may have influenced Shakespeare's incorporation of legal themes. Skinner notes how Shylock and Lucrece's trial may be read as a conflict between Shylock's flawed use of *consitutio inuridicalis* (where the act is admitted and the only question is to its justness) which is defeated by Balthazar's skilful recasting of the case as one of *constitutio legitima* or *legalis* (where the dispute ultimately arises from the *interpretation* of law -- speaking to Balthazar's status as an administrator character, as we shall see).<sup>134</sup> Skinner contends that once the concept of ‘invention’ (as in the invention of an argument) entered the intellectual zeitgeist the role of rhetoric as an extension of logic and a means of

<sup>133</sup> Portia means ‘something which is given’ in Latin and in German, whilst Balthazar means ‘to save the life of the King’. *The Pocket Oxford Latin Dictionary* ed. by James Morwood (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>134</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Forensic Shakespeare*, 1st edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 54.

analysis whose application may reveal truths is abandoned.<sup>135</sup> Our goals in this chapter are to examine how this application of the rhetorical tradition intersects with concepts of systematised power and, ultimately, how this intersection influences Shakespeare's characterization and the aspects of which later influence subsequent and contemporary writers. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Balthazar represents the collective will of a Platonic circle of friends who, via the arts of rhetoric, impose a reading of the law upon the state in line with their civil society.

The state in *The Merchant of Venice* equates to the interests of the small band of central protagonists placed under threat by Shylock's vengeance. Shakespeare uses his characterisation of administrators, in this way, to represent theories of power relationships as these exist outside the action on stage (and, by implication, within the world of the audience). It is in this sense that Balthazar is the administrator character most obviously used to represent a very particular ideological reading of justice and contract law. Despite Balthazar's influence, it is, however, ultimately the underlying affection of the protagonists, and Shylock's self-loathing vengeance, which drives the dramatic development of the play. Shakespeare's use of Balthazar as a disguise, behind which lies Portia, emphasises the point that it is the group dynamics which drive the action. Shakespeare appears to utilise the structure of rhetorical techniques and the theme of speech ethics to set political theories within the form of the morality play (rather than the comedy of manners). The subplot of subjugation and rhetorical definitions may be read, therefore, as analogous to a representation of the state as an 'indispensable' means for maintaining civil relations – in this manner, the state is itself an extension of the rhetoric used within the play.

*The Merchant of Venice* acts as a vignette of a conflagration of discourses at the turn of the century: the increasing influence of the State as an entity distinct from Church and Monarch; the growing importance of commerce; and the last stages of the Aristotelian and Platonic theological conflict.<sup>136</sup> In particular, the play stages those crises concerning concepts of worth and of essence that occur with the emergence of

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<sup>135</sup> Skinner, *Forensic Shakespeare*, p. 314.

<sup>136</sup> *The Merchant of Venice* is widely held to have been first performed between 1597 (the same year nine hundred Jews were expelled from Spanish-owned Milan) and 1599 and first put on sale in 1600. William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. by Leah S. Marcus (London and New York: Norton Critical Edition, 2006), p. 2. all other quotes from this volume.

commerce and mercantile relations of exchange. New concepts of worth associated with the commodity – what later classical economics will designate ‘use value’ and ‘exchange value’ – undermine existing metaphysical concepts of substratum/virtue and fulfilled potential. What Peter Miller (1992) calls ‘the vast machine of economic calculation that is accounting’<sup>137</sup> comes to replace the theological and metaphysical value systems. Shylock is a victim of this shift. (As we shall see in the next chapter, Goethe's *Faust* further scrutinises such changes in concepts of worth at the end of the eighteenth century.) Within this tumult, there is an implicit call for the need for an institutionalisation of the administrative role to become universally acknowledged.

So far, this chapter has attempted to trace the evolution of the concept of speech ethics (and its role within the transference of social engagement to social structures which corresponds to the transmutation of essentialist concepts into material circumstances) on a conspiratorial level in *Love's Labour's Lost*, on a communal level within *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and on a hierarchical level within *The Tempest*. I now move on to consider this as it is depicted at a legal and state level within *The Merchant of Venice*. Just as Contarini (1649) attempted in the mid seventeenth century to encapsulate the shifting dynamic between state and individual when he wrote to the Doge informing him that ‘the king [Charles I] no longer receives the title either of king or Majesty, and is merely called Charles Stuart, so that in putting him to death the victim may not be the king, the act being too abominable, but the private individual so called’,<sup>138</sup> so, at an earlier moment, *The Merchant of Venice* re-examines the relations between state and citizen, depicting a society in which material circumstances have begun to supplant essentialist concepts within the machinery of the state. Shakespeare dramatises a conception of Venice as an unstable society dependent upon the suppression of its citizenry, pre-empting Rousseau's description of the Venetian republic as having broken the social contract.

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<sup>137</sup> Peter Miller, 'Accounting and Objectivity: The Invention of Calculating Selves and Calculable Spaces', *Annals of Scholarship*, 9.1 (1992), pp. 61-85.

<sup>138</sup> Alvise Contarini, 'Venetian Ambassador at Munster, to the Doge and Senate, Advices from London, the 15th December 1648', in *The Puritan Revolution: A Documentary History*, ed. by Stuart E. Prall (London: Routledge, 1969), pp. 174-81.

Having usurped its royalty, 'all private citizens recover by right their natural liberty, and are forced, but not bound, to obey'.<sup>139</sup>

At the same time, *The Merchant of Venice* provides a particularly significant manifestation of the colloquial Elizabethan interpretation of Machiavellianism in the 1590s. As Raab (1965) notes, 'At least from the middle 'eighties [1580s] onwards, Machiavelli was being quite widely read in England and was no longer the sole preserve of 'Italianate' Englishmen and their personal contracts, as had been the case earlier.'<sup>140</sup> Raab describes Machiavelli's influence upon Elizabethan politics as cementing impressions 'that there were patterns in human affairs which had little to do with Christian ethics'.<sup>141</sup> *The Merchant of Venice* may be viewed as Shakespeare returning to the interplay between human affairs and state ideology with less focus upon speech ethics (as a metaphor for social consciousness versus state discourse), and more emphasis on how individual behaviour subconsciously manifests ideology. If Shylock is, of course, a problematic reminder of the era's anti-Semitism, this enhances a tension here between the ideal society, and the realities of individual and collective rule. Shakespeare seems, then, to knowingly invoke a conventional anti-Semitic association of the Jew with money, venality, and mercantile capitalism.

*The Merchant of Venice* functions as a non-Christian morality play, with a similar formal structure to a psychomachia, in that it depicts the process by which ideology is internalised, manifested and, subsequently, rationalised as independent volition. The stage becomes a physically divided representation of bifurcated concepts in continual tension. This tension underpins all of the interactions and ideologies which exist within the subtext, and are refracted through the play's dialogue and units of action. Paster (1985) describes Shylock as creating 'a city within a city, a city apart',<sup>142</sup> but it is undeniable that the entity of the state exists within the play as a

<sup>139</sup> Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, p. 71.

<sup>140</sup> Felix Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli: A Changing Interpretation 1500-1700* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 34 - 35. *The Merchant of Venice* continues many of the themes identified within *The Jew of Malta* by Christopher Marlowe. See David Bevington's interpretation of the figure of Dr. Roderigo Lopez, the Jewish doctor of Queen Elizabeth, in his introduction to William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. by David Bevington (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), p. xxvi.

<sup>141</sup> Raab, *The English Face of Machiavelli: A Changing Interpretation 1500-1700*, p. 256.

<sup>142</sup> Gail Kern Paster, *The Idea of the City in the Age of Shakespeare* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1985), p. 196. By combining the elements of a port and a city, Venice was attributed the 'natural' qualities of both a port

continual point of reference. At the beginning of the trial, the Duke states that ‘the world thinks, and I think so too [...] | Thou wilt not only loose the forfeiture, | [...] and] forgive a moiety of the principal’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, IV. 1) but differentiates between ‘the world’ (and its expectations) and the entity of the state, which becomes referred to as ‘the law’ in the trial scene. However, the distinction between the entity of the state and its law has earlier been exposed as a merely semantic distinction, with the statement by Antonio to Solanio, that the ‘duke cannot deny the course of law [...] if it be denied, | Will much impeach the justice of the state’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, III. 6). This is highlighted again with ‘let the danger light | upon your charter and your city’s freedom’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, IV. 1). Shylock’s use of slavery as an analogy to legally sanctioned moral equivalence reveals Shylock’s motivation as one of citizenship. Slaves, in the Venetian state and in state law, are possessions - ‘The slaves are ours’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, IV.1) – and therefore non-citizens and non-people. As a Jew, Shylock is fighting to be recognised as a citizen.<sup>143</sup> This is the crux of Shylock’s argument and indicates his own rationalisations for his irrational desire to enact the internalised stereotype of the vengeful Jew and to see this stereotype accepted – ‘owned’ in a manner of speaking – by the state:

JEW:                    So do I answer you.

The pound of flesh which I demand of him

Is dearly bought, as mine, and I will have it.

If you deny me, fie upon your law!

There is no force in the decrees of Venice.

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and a city – representing a no-where place (a utopia). Hegel described how ‘the principle of family life is dependent on the soil, on land, on terra firma. Similarly, the natural element for industry... is the sea’. For Hegel, ‘rivers are not natural boundaries of separation ... it is truer to say that they, and the sea likewise, link men together’. G. W. F. Hegel, ‘Philosophy of Right’, (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001) (190). Venice is therefore perceived to be the material representation of imperial, ethnic and religious ideals.

<sup>143</sup> In 1586 the last meeting of the delegates from Italy’s Jewish communities attempted to centralize Jewish self-government but ultimately reflected the localism of the city states. In 1587 the rabbis of Jerusalem appealed to the Jews of Italy to finance the restoration of the Nachmanides synagogue in Jerusalem. In 1593 Pope Clement VIII ‘expels’ (renders ‘non-citizen’) all the Jews living in all the papal states except Rome.



I stand for judgement. Answer! Shall I have it? (*The Merchant of Venice*, IV. 1)

In a comedic tragedy, Shakespeare often contrasted pathos and bathos within the same characters and in the same context. By placing itself between farce and tragedy, *The Merchant of Venice* focuses upon norms (as ‘order without law’)<sup>144</sup> and, by placing these norms against a backdrop of political and social tumult, emphasises the influence of ideology upon internal consciousness and the characters’ interplay. The bathos of the Belmont scenes superficially contrasts with the pathos of the scenes in Venice, and implies that fealty to inherent worth, as distinct from attributed or implied worth, is morally superior to the market morality exhibited in Venice. This apparent (and false) dichotomy supplies the Belmont scenes with a sense of irony, embodied within the person of Portia.

Portia acts as a proto-‘thing-like’ being – a cultural commodity, governed, in Adorno’s words, ‘by the principle of [...] realization as value and not by [her] own specific content and harmonious formation’.<sup>145</sup> The term ‘commodity’, defined as ‘something useful or valuable’, has its etymological roots in the French *commodité* (‘benefit, profit’), from the Latin *commoditatem* (‘fitness, adaptation’), derived from ‘*commodus*’ or ‘convenient’, and, I want to argue, echoes Portia’s defining characteristics in this regard.<sup>146</sup> Portia appears to act outside of her own personal interests in order to ensure that her value is realised throughout the play’s units of action. Portia gives Bassanio the ring so that it may act as a continual reminder of her value to him (and, so that upon its loss, it may indicate the ‘vantage to exclaim on you’). Similarly, Portia describes Bassanio in terms of the commodity: ‘Since you are dear bought, I will love you dear’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, III. 2). Portia attends the trial and defends Antonio, proclaiming that ‘never shall you [Bassano] lie by Portia’s side | With unquiet soul’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, III. 2), yet her personal motivation to engage in the trial lacks some credibility when

<sup>144</sup> Robert Ellickson, *Order without Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

<sup>145</sup> Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Culture Industry Reconsidered’, *New German Critique*, VI (1975), pp. 12-19. See also K. Newman, ‘Portia’s Ring’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 38.1 (1987). R. A. Sharp, ‘Gift Exchange and the Economies of Spirit in *the Merchant of Venice*’, *Modern Philosophy*, 83.3 (1986), pp. 20–37. W. Cohen, ‘The Merchant of Venice’, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 37.1 (1986), pp. 20-37. See also Simon Critchley and Tom McCarthy, ‘Universal Shylockery: Money and Morality in *the Merchant of Venice*’, *Diacritics*, 34.1 (2004), pp. 3-17.

<sup>146</sup> *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

compared to the depiction of the internalised stereotype and cyclical abuse motivating Shylock. It is fitting that Portia is the agent who informs Antonio that his ‘argosies | Are richly come to harbour suddenly’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, V. 1), as it is only through her intervention that the fantastical effects of poetic licence intervene in

... the course of law,

For the commodity that strangers have

With us in Venice, if it be denied,

Will much impeach the justice of the state

Since that the trade and profit of the city

Consisteth of all nations. (*The Merchant of Venice*, III. 4)

Portia’s poetic license is dependent upon her successful portrayal as a commodity, and, as such, she is able to render a legally binding contract without rendering the state impotent, insofar as she functions within the ideological framework (represented through the rhetorical structure) of the Venetian state. Portia’s characterisation adapts in such a way as to knowingly reflect the audience’s preconceptions and predilections, culminating in the scene when she adopts ‘such a habit | That they shall think we are accomplished | With that we lack’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, III. 5) – that of a legal doctor. This ostentatious manipulation makes her defence of Antonio problematic for the audience. The commodification of Portia, and her complicity with it, reveals the extent to which individuals are altered by their economic status on a level of consciousness which influences individual morality and continues into social discourse.<sup>147</sup> Portia represents a justification of commerce that appeals to the Aristotelian concept of ‘good’, *Eudaimonia*; she adopts the traits of a commodity in an attempt to achieve ‘moral flourishing’ through the fulfilment of material needs by rational means.<sup>148</sup> The theme of value in *The Merchant of Venice*,

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<sup>147</sup> This dramatic conflict, between the willing commodification of the self and the priceless ‘ideal’, is also a central feature of Goethe’s *Faust*, as will be seen in the next chapter, and Goethe, too, uses characterisation to embody this conflict.

<sup>148</sup> ‘Eudaimonia’ of ‘moral flourishing’ achieved through adopting excellence (arête) in thought. Whereas rhetoric alone ‘is a faculty which may be used to promote justice or abused to support villainy’, Aristotle argues

although less directly relevant to our purposes, incorporates and interrogates contemporary ideas in much the same way as those ideas of the intersection between knowledge and power which do concern us in the examination of the administrator character. Elements of the play, in particular the actions, treatment and depiction of Portia, seem to engage with Aristotle's theory of the *Communis aestimatio* or 'common estimation'. This concept of the common estimation suggests a rationale for how it is that goods may be involved in reciprocal exchange, and argues that is the *use* to which these goods are put which forms the basis upon which they are needed. Portia's transformation into Balthazar is a transformation, in Aristotelian terms of subjective form, but not of material, cause, or, arguably, purpose. This change itself is an instance in which the use to which the persona of Balthazar in the trial determines the need for her transformation, not the need for transformation itself.

The morality within *The Merchant of Venice* thus reflects a cultural shift towards material inclinations of Aristotelian morality, in that the characters' ambitions may be described in terms of 'living well and doing well' (*Eudaimonia*). Shylock moves from the universal motivation of short-term gratification towards the happiness of Plato's *Republic*, in which true happiness originates from the 'arrangement of the soul' that produces justice.<sup>149</sup> Despite his Biblical language, this serves to underline his motivation for manifesting the internalised inhumanity he felt as a non-citizen. Shylock's apology for usury – that Jacob bred from ewes – is not a citation from Jewish tradition. Deuteronomy is cited as an apology for usury and regulates its practice, forbidding charging interest from fellow Jews (23:20), but permitting its charge upon gentiles (23:21). Shylock's use of Jacob's ladder – a symbol of the Virgin Mary's womb, uniting heaven and earth (*Genesis* 28:10-17) – could be said (rather speculatively) to allude implicitly to the Platonic roots of Eastern

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that a level of material comfort is needed to reach this state of fulfilled potential. See Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. by L. Brown D. Ross (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

<sup>149</sup> Aristotle defines this willingness to endure for a higher gratification as being: 'which is in itself worthy of pursuit more final than that which is worthy of pursuit for the sake of something else, and that which is never desirable for the sake of something else more final than the things that are desirable both in themselves and for the sake of that other thing, and therefore we call final without qualification that which is always desirable in itself and never for the sake of something else'. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 10.

Catholicism;<sup>150</sup> perhaps this is an attempt to gain status by demonstrating a superior knowledge of Christianity. Shylock's tone is, at any rate, that of the pedagogue ('Mark what Jacob did', 'This was a way to thrive' *The Merchant of Venice*, I. 3), and Antonio is clearly blindsided by the reference ('And what of him? Did he take interest?' *The Merchant of Venice*, I. 3). The conflicting interpretation is between naturalism (Antonio's 'fashioned by the hand of heaven') and Aristotelian materialism (Shylock's 'he was blessed; And thrift is blessing').

As such, this scene is a conflict of rhetoric, with Antonio employing a straw man argument ('The devil can cite scripture') and Shylock arguing *post hoc ergo propter hoc* (usury follows thrift) via a bad analogy (comparing the accumulation of money with the breeding of sheep). Antonio's ability to intercept and counteract these arguments indicates to the audience a higher status and a more accomplished classical education. It is only after this conflict of rhetorical ability that Shylock cites his personal grievance as grounds for his choice of forfeit. Shylock's motivation is therefore laid out in the manner of his crafting of the contract: a literal translation of *The Old Testament*, altered by small increments of rhetoric to accommodate his revenge for personal slights – achieved via manipulation of the circumstances for the loan via the material medium of capital. By acting upon his own internalised rhetoric, which marks him as essentially 'other', Shylock, motivated by emotion, engineers a material outcome from an essentialist principle. Extrapolated, this highlights the paradox at the heart of the Catholic state's ideological justification for rule. Hence, the symbolic threat of Shylock becomes a constitutional reality.

It is the trial that reveals the ideological jeopardy in which the contract places the concept of the Venetian state. Shylock's immediate recourse is to the state – he 'plies the duke at morning and at night, | And doth impeach the freedom of the state | If they deny him justice' (*The Merchant of Venice*, III. 2). Yet the individuals who constitute the state's elite are presented as far from impartial:

Twenty merchants,

The duke himself, and the magnificos

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<sup>150</sup> The Platonic Gnostic conception of logos is evident in the Book of John 1:1: 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' See Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Apostolic Christianity A.D. 1-100* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1883).

Of greatest port have all persuaded with him,

But none can drive him from the envious plea

Of forfeiture, of justice, and his bond. (*The Merchant of Venice*, III. 2)

In this description, the paradox of the contract is matched against the paradox of the state as having the traits of a separate entity, despite its constituent members being themselves entities. Shylock's desire for contractual completion is 'envious' (and therefore sinful), yet remains 'just' (and therefore righteous). Due to the institutionalisation of law, this moral paradox, that an action may be lawful but immoral, becomes extrapolated through the state machinery to compel its rulers to endorse Shylock's revenge in the courts, despite having 'persuaded with him' as private citizens.

The jeopardy comes with the public nature of the contract and the overt nature of the 'moral incontinence' – *Aponoia*. The state would be clearly shown to be morally incongruent and logically inconstant, insofar as the Platonic concept of justice (as a transcendental impetus) conflicts with the Aristotelian concept of law (the circumstantially dependent achievement of potential) – a revelation with the potential to destabilise the very concept of state and introduce a dangerous precedent in which state law would have to bow to contract law in all instances. The individual 'contract' would thereby supersede the role of the state *and would have been institutionally recognised as doing so*. Without the assumed authority of state constitution over individual agreement, the state would lose all authority – perceived and actual.

The lack of sympathy for Shylock appears to represent an Aristotelian-like concept of injustice, in that a man committing self-harm does not merely commit a grievance upon himself but 'towards the State; for it is the State that punishes him'. The view that Shylock deserves sympathy as he is acting out of a sense of injustice is, when understood within Aristotle's paradigm, impossible:

a man act[s] unjustly in the special sense towards himself; for that would mean that the same thing could at once be taken from and given to the same person.

Unjust treatment implies at least two persons, one of whom deliberately makes an aggression on the rights of the other.<sup>151</sup>

Therefore Portia's defence rests ultimately upon an unstated major premise concerning the 'inconceivability' of the state causing harm to itself. As such, it must be Shylock in the wrong, as the state may not 'act unjustly' towards itself – the aim of the state is to achieve the human good, which entails the design of institutions and utilisation of individuals to cultivate Aristotelian, teleological virtues as distinct from the protection of the individual. The result of the play's insistent focus upon the interpersonal relationships of civil society – a concept which, by the 1600s, was not only established, but was viewed as a palpable force in the fortunes of a state<sup>152</sup> – is that the action of the scene functions as a kind of 'anamorphosis', as Slavoj Žižek describes it, in which 'if you look at the thing too directly at the oppressive social dimension, you don't see it. You can see it in an oblique way only if it remains in the background' [*sic*].<sup>153</sup> Shakespeare softens the wider commentary and subversive themes within his plays through characterisation, ultimately enhancing their anamorphic effect. At the same time, by vocalising their 'internal' dialogue, Shakespeare depicts the suitors as 'played' against Portia's asides. This serves to emphasise the unstated influence of the discourses upon which the state is dependent.

The loan Antonio makes is free from interest until past 'the appointed day of payment forward' (rather than compiled from the moment the loan is taken) and the

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<sup>151</sup> Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, p. 100.

<sup>152</sup> '[T]here is no question to be made, but that every civil societie is contained and linked together in a certain unitie, and by distraction and breach of the unity is again as easily dissolved. For nothing have sooner overthrowne the mightie and opulent estate of many great and glorious citties that heretofore have perished then homebred discord and civill dissention'. Edmund Mattes, *The Commonwealth and Government of Venice* (London: John Windet for Edmund Mattes 1599). In *Horace Howard Furness Memorial (Shakespeare) Library* – online archive:

<http://dewey.library.upenn.edu/SCETI/PrintedBooksNew/index.cfm?TextID=contarini&PagePosition=1> accessed 07/04/10 10.09 am.

<sup>153</sup> Slavoj Žižek, 'Žižek on the Film *Children of Men*', (2010) <<http://agitateur.wordpress.com/2010/03/09/zizek-sur-le-film-%C2%AB-children-of-men-%C2%BB/>>. *The Merchant of Venice* is therefore a play orientated around civil society rather than the family or the state, which Hegel described as *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, as being the arena in which the norms of society are created, and – in this instance and cited as such by Hegel – 'by reason of the very horror of the law, it never had to be enforced'. See Hegel, 'Philosophy of Right', (26).

‘interest’ is a penalty of Biblical dimensions: a pound of flesh. The pound of flesh, ‘to be cut off and taken | In what part of your body pleaseth me’ (*The Merchant of Venice*, I. 3. 150), represents an implicit threat not only to Antonio’s life (the threat of fatal amputation or disembowelment: the punishment of a traitor), but to his ancestry (the threat of castration preventing heirs) and also to his Christian soul (the implicit threat of circumcision, given the bawdy tone of the play, would be in the minds of an Elizabethan audience and, to a presumably Catholic Antonio, would prevent resurrection upon judgment day). This pound of ‘fair flesh’ is, therefore, deliberately open to a paranoiac, anti-Semitic interpretation. The influence of the unstated force of commerce, and the failure of the discourses of the seventeenth century to address these, accounts for the ‘absence’ Moody sees as the play’s primary theme,<sup>154</sup> whilst also accounting for Brown’s interpretation that the play focuses upon paradoxes of human experience.<sup>155</sup>

*The Merchant of Venice* acknowledges the need for a new discourse to describe the relations between individual, society, and the organic word. It is not insignificant, then, that Donne (1626), for example, uses a similar narrative to *The Merchant of Venice* to illustrate the theory of impertinence as a phenomenon unaccounted for in the widely accepted concepts of destiny (‘to speak to a natural man’) and God (‘to speak to a Christian’):

[A] merchant condensed, kneaded and packed up in a great estate, becomes a lord; and a merchant rarefied, blown up by a perfidious factor or by a riotous son, evaporates into air, into nothing and is not seen.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> Moody argues that the *Merchant of Venice* ‘is about the manner in which Christians succeed in the world by not practising their ideals of love and mercy; that it is about their exploitation of an assumed unworldliness to gain the worldly advantage over Shylock; and that, finally, it is about the *essential* likeness of Shylock and his judges... the play does not celebrate the Christian virtues so much as expose their absence’. A. D. Moody, ‘Shakespeare: *The Merchant of Venice*’, *Studies in English Literature* 21 (1964), pp. 38-44.

<sup>155</sup> According to John Russell Brown *The Merchant of Venice* is ‘about conundrums such as the more you give, the more you get’ and that ‘giving is the most important part – giving prodigally, without thought for the taking’. John Russell Brown, ‘Introduction’, in *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. by John Russell Brown (London: Arden, 1955).

<sup>156</sup> John Donne, ‘A Sermon Preached at the Funerals of Sir William’, in *Shakespeare’s England*, ed. by R. E. Pritchard (London: Thamesis, 1999) (p. 114).

Seventeenth-century conceptions of economics were limited in their ability to recognise the full potential of capital to influence social relations and consciousness by virtue of the existing Catholic paradigm, although these conceptualisations were changing, not least due to the emerging Puritan work ethic, as later famously described by Weber.<sup>157</sup> In accountancy, which arose from St Cassian's doctrine of confession,<sup>158</sup> wealth was perceived as an extension of an individual's physical actions, themselves a manifestation of their moral state:

Also it is said that the head of the merchant has a hundred eyes, and still they are not sufficient for all he has to say or to do. These things are told by people who have had experience in them, such as the Venetians [...] So in the divine functions of the Holy Church they sing that God promised the crown to the watchful ones ... so that the daily care about your business would not seem heavy to you, especially the writing down everything and putting down every day everything that happens to you, as we shall unfold in the next chapters.<sup>159</sup>

It is worth noting, in this context, that, prior to the modern discipline of economics, value was not considered elastic as such - value was envisioned more in terms of a measure of jeopardy in accrurement, or as a manifestation of inherent worth reaching full potential. Wealth was a quality to be attributed to an individual achieved by dint of his attributes, as with Brenton's description of a Merchant as 'the exercise of the exchange, the honour of credit, the observation of time and the understanding of

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<sup>157</sup> Weber argues that the values of the Reformation, while not the result of economic changes, concur with those of Capitalism, and that the Puritan outlook favoured (rather than encouraged) the bourgeois life – for more, see In a manner similar to how Aristotle argued that a level of material and socially privilege was probably a perquisite of Eudaimonia. This period saw the rise of what has retrospectively been termed mercantilism, an economic system based on the theory that the earth contained fixed quantities of gold and silver. Between 1521 and 1660, the Spanish imported 18,000 tons of silver from Mexico and Peru - three times the supply of silver in Europe before 1520. This movement facilitated the spread of commerce by allowing a common unit of exchange (rare metal) to become internationally ubiquitous (albeit at a slower rate across the rest of Spain due the lack of a sophisticated banking system). Shylock's equation of gold with a pound of flesh may be a direct assault upon mercantile value systems, and through it, a direct assault upon the Protestant Ethic as described by Weber.

<sup>158</sup> The doctrine of Semipelagimism attempted to find a middle way between the will power focused doctrine of Pelagianism and Augustine of Hippo's emphasis on original sin and the need for Divine intervention. From James Alfred Aho, *Confession and Book Keeping* (Albany: State University of New York, 2005).

<sup>159</sup> *Lucas Pacioli's Treatise*, 1494, trans. John Bart Geijsbeek, University of Toronto archive 1872 accessed online 09/04/2010 <http://www.archive.org/details/ancientdoubleent00geijuoft>.



thrift. His study is number, his care his accounts, his comfort his conscience, and his wealth his good name ... In sum, he is the pillar of a city, the enricher of a country, the furnisher of a court'. This confusion between capital as wealth and capital as inherent worth is present within Bassanio's own sense of self-worth, stating that 'all the wealth I had/Ran in my veins – I was a gentlemen' (*The Merchant of Venice* 3.ii). These desperate concepts of value reveal *Merchant of Venice* as a microcosm of the confusions and contentions surrounding differing paradigms and discourses of value at the turn of the century. Shylock is portrayed as not conforming to this practice – he himself handles his accounts 'by the near guess of my memory' which stands in direct contrast to the proposed method of the real merchant Lucas Pacioli in the late fifteenth century: 'Fourteenth Item: I have so many debtors (debitori) ... giving the names of each one...' <sup>160</sup>

Shylock exposes himself financially by taking on a debt to 'Tubal, a wealthy Hebrew of my tribe' (*The Merchant of Venice*, I. 3). Shylock's free distribution of debt, credit, and money stands in stark contrast to his prior reticence to lend to Antonio, suggesting that Shylock conspired to attain a level of unwholesome leverage by feigning thrift, and also implies – in the absence of the act of accounting – that Shylock's usury is immoral in its apparent profligacy, as the act of exacting financial accounting serves, itself, as an act of religious meditation. For Pacioli, for example, the account of one's wealth was also an account of one's actions:

But above all, remember God and your neighbour; never forget to attend to religious meditation every morning, for through this you will never lose your way, and by being charitable, you will not lose your riches. <sup>161</sup>

Of course, Shylock, as a Jew, is an affront to the Christian doctrine. The existence of Judaism makes absolutist concepts of Christianity problematic, as Judaism outdates Christianity and does not acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. In turn, this inherent insecurity may provide a basis for understanding how it was that Aristotelian ontology, under the stewardship of Thomas Aquinas, became so important to Christian doctrine, as it provided a rational for the doctrine of the trinity, rendering

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<sup>160</sup> See N. Breton, *The Good and the Badde* (1616), in R. E. Prichard, *Shakespeare's England* (Sutton: Sutton Publishing, 2003), p. 248.

<sup>161</sup> Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*.1.iii

Catholicism independent from Jewish tradition. Trinitarian theory and Christian revelation translated Aristotelian concepts into the theory of grace and transubstantiation: ‘essence’ (‘what it was to be a thing’) and ‘nature’ (‘Platonic universal’) as ‘substance’ (‘the genus to which a substance belongs’), and ‘accident’ (‘the *substratum* or matter which unites all its properties). Moreover, Judaism itself provides an alternative narrative to that of Christian salvation through Jesus, which is perhaps implicitly at stake in the ways in which Balthazar and Shylock each argue for a different ‘narrative’ to the reading of the contract. If there is, then, a subtle semantic antagonism between Portia and Shylock here, this is perhaps indicated by her adoption of the name of a Magi, Balthazar. (This name is accepted by the Western church in the eighth century, but not by the iconoclast eastern churches.) The adoption of the name Balthazar by the character responsible for defeating Shylock’s contract contrasts directly with Shylock’s citation of Jacob for his apology for usury. All of these symbolic and personal aspects to the character of Shylock serve to isolate him within the play and within the allegorical structure of the play. Shylock becomes the quintessential autonomous agent within the play, to the extent that even his Jewish heritage is ultimately denied to him. Within the schema of this thesis, Shylock may thus be read as the ‘anti-administrator’ who uses rhetoric for his own ends, representing the death of civil conversation, and existing within the text as a representative of his own motives. Balthazar is his diametric opposite in every sense, and it is this sense of absolute autonomy which appears to lie at the heart of the sympathetic undertones which might be felt towards the character of Shylock despite his disproportionate desire for recompense. Just as the administrator character’s antithesis has an undercurrent of sympathy within his representation, within each of the plays examined within this chapter, the administrator character has an equally provocative undercurrent of domination and *schadenfreude* which appears to lie at the root of some of the future administrator character’s darker representations.

The reference to Catholic imagery associates Shylock’s contract with the beliefs of Eastern and Judaic iconoclasts (characterised by literal interpretation). This effect is supported by the use of Catholic ideology to champion its literal interpretation.

During Elizabeth's Protestant reign, this would suggest the investiture controversy<sup>162</sup> and would represent the triumph of the secular court over theocracy – both Jewish Old Testament law and, by association, as suggested by the reoccurring emphasis upon currency, possibly invoking within his Protestant audience fears of Catholic financial domination and money hoarding, creating what Danson argues is a dialectical multiplicity of socio-economic relationships.<sup>163</sup> (It is worth noting that, in January 1594, Venice became the centre of conflicts of jurisdiction between the Papacy and the Venetian state which continued well into the mid 1600s.)<sup>164</sup> The bond, therefore, casts the fight for the 'Christian' (not 'Catholic') Antonio as a metaphor for the English struggle to remain Protestant against the combined forces of Catholicism and the (supposed) internal threat of Judaism. This need for state representatives with management or administrative responsibilities – a secular priesthood and defensive agents against the threatening ideologies – is highlighted and answered in Portia's intervention:

There is no power in Venice

Can alter a decree established.

'Twill be recorded for a precedent,

And many an error by the same example

Will rush into the state. It cannot be. (*The Merchant of Venice*, IV. 1)

Portia's disguise is, in this sense, an extension of the negative concepts of rhetoric. Portia's self-appointment of herself as a legal expert that may sway the Court, and the Duke's decision to appoint Belario, represents a re-enactment and inversion of the investiture controversy in the secular realm. The dependence upon Belario ('good

<sup>162</sup> The investiture controversy arose from the reclamation by the Catholic Church of the power of investiture of Church Offices and subsequent reclaiming this power from the state and the nepotism of the nobility.

<sup>163</sup> Lawrence Danson, *The Harmonies of the Merchant of Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

<sup>164</sup> Don Cesare of Este, upon threat of ex-communication, ceded Ferrara and all the territory of the Duchy to the Pope. In 1600 the Pope demanded authority over Ceneda – a town south-east of Belluno ('good-one', with semantic qualities too close to Belmont, or 'good-mountain' to go unnoticed). By 1598 the Edict of Nantes led to increased pressure for Catholic governments to submit to papal control. Cit: John Norwich, *A History of Venice*, Penguin Books, 1983, p. 506-517. 'The King's Men' also performed Barnabe Barnes' 1606 play *The Devil's Charter* (in which Pope Alexander VI sells his soul) at the Globe Theatre. See John D. Cox, 'Stage Devilry in Two King's Men Plays of 1606', *The Modern Language review*, 93.4 (1998), pp. 937-47.

voice' in French) is a reference to the potential role of rhetoric within the law, and constitutes a reminder of the state's dependence upon ideology conveyed through 'argument' to secure its authority. It is the *reductio ad absurdum* of Portia's argument ('the bond doth give thee here no jot of blood' *The Merchant of Venice*, IV. 1)<sup>165</sup> which allows for Antonio's release and Shylock's punishment. Portia's argument relies upon the paradoxical premise that one may break the law during its inaction and the assumption that Shylock orchestrated the contract expressly to murder Antonio. This is the same logic Shylock uses to emphasise the absurdity of racial prejudice when he emphasises the arbitrary and reductionist quality of ethnic difference - 'I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions?' (*The Merchant of Venice*, III. 1) - in direct response to Salerio's statement of essential difference: 'there is more difference between thy flesh [Shylock] and hers [Jessica] | than between jet and ivory' (*The Merchant of Venice*, III. 1). Despite Shylock's assertion that 'there is no power in the tongue of man | To alter me' (*The Merchant of Venice* IV. 1), it is the formulaic rhetorical trick of the machinery of the state – ideology delivered and embodied within the administrative character, achieved by Portia's intervention – which adds authenticity to the jeopardy that Shylock purportedly represents to the legal stability of Venice. It is this argument which prevents Shylock from assuming the status of the 'excluded middle' (*tertium non datur*) between that which is the case (Semitic, owed usury, outcast) and not the case (Christian, credited, substantive, citizen).

Portia's intervention is propagandist – portraying the state as the manifestation of, and acting in defence of, rational justice rather than arbitrary, irrational law. Daniel Banes' schematic interpretation of the trial, in his 1975 book *The Provocative Merchant of Venice*, in which Portia is 'in an intermediate position' within the Sephirotic Tree of Kabbalah, while in itself spurious, does indicate something of the extent to which the role of the institutional intermediary (be that within supernatural or secular hierarchies) was understood at the time.<sup>166</sup> Portia is an apologist for the

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<sup>165</sup> This is also effectively a 'continuum fallacy', in that despite the spilling of blood being an indisputable consequence of the cutting of a pound of flesh, that it is not explicitly stated implies that the flesh must be taken without blood being spilt.

<sup>166</sup> Portia, in this reading, represents of 'Tiphereth BEAUTY or MERCY' mediating between Shylock's 'Sphira Gevura or Din, JUDGEMENT SEVERITY' and Antonio's 'Hesed, LOVING KINDNESS'. See Daniel Banes, *The Provocative Merchant of Venice* (Chicago: Malcome House Publications, 1975). Banes' interpretation of the

state in both narrative and ideology.<sup>167</sup> Hence, Balthazar is never an unproblematic character or an outright hero but is, rather, an example of utility manifested. This is a character trait shared by all of Shakespeare's administrators, but in Balthazar it is flaunted, and, behind the disguise, there is a sense of Portia's revelling in the power, something that possibly has its roots in Portia's behaviour towards the suitors. As such, Balthazar is coloured by the motivations of the higher powers the disguise represents, and these powers are cast as morally ambiguous through their depiction.

Despite many provocative presentations of anti-Semitism, the questions raised by conflicts between value and state intervention in *The Merchant of Venice* remain unresolved. This lack of a clear resolution prevents the play from becoming an instrumental reduction of interpersonal interaction.<sup>168</sup> Instead, the conflicts that run through *The Merchant of Venice* represent an apology for the entity of 'the state', and a call for an institutional, secular agency acting on its behalf as an alternative to prejudice or individualism. This represents a precursor to an ideology of what Charles Taylor calls the 'disengaged self', where the ideal of independence acknowledges the vision of instrumental control over an objectified world and objectified self.<sup>169</sup> The emergence of this 'disengaged self' reflects a new cultural emphasis upon autonomy in which hegemony provides a means to subordinate the natural order (the 'functional domain'), creating a sense of self-worth dependent upon the subject's status as a rational, autonomous, empowered being. Shylock is

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Sephirothic Tree contains many dubious interpretations and translations, but was founded upon the immediate interpretations of *The Merchant of Venice* by the elitist 'School of the Night'. See M. Bradbrook, *The School of Night* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1936).

<sup>167</sup> The English Poor law of 1601 legislated for the distribution of grain supplies in times of dearth establishing poor rates on a parochial basis, the compulsory apprenticeship of poor children, and houses of correction, with attempts to find work for the deserving poor. Laws such as these stood in direct contrast to the assumption that certain sections of society were effectively commodities of the state – recourses to be exploited, as with Pope Clement VIII's expulsion of the Jews living in all the papal states except for Rome, Avignon and Ancona in 1593.

<sup>168</sup> Were the play's conclusion to serve as more of a resolution, *The Merchant of Venice* might implicitly endorse the state; that is, were the play to suggest a 'restoration of the human world and of human relationship to man himself', which prevents the 'the real, individual man' from absorbing 'into himself the abstract citizen'. For an argument concerning the ideological pretensions of the state, which has some relevance here, see Karl Marx, 'On the Jewish Question', in *The Marx and Engels Reader*, ed. by R. C. Tucker, 2nd edn (New York: Norton, 1978), p. 15.

<sup>169</sup> For more on reason and the natural order, see C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge and London Harvard University Press, 1989), pp. 121, 43 and 49.

therefore a man re-defined from 'Platonic' essential qualities to 'Aristotelian' (use-manifestation) concepts of essence (effectively one of internalised circumstances) as 'other': Shylock, that is to say, is a martyr crushed by the Thomist elements of state doctrine. By dramatising these intra-doctrinal conflicts, Shakespeare makes them relevant to a common audience. It is the apparent need for administrative intervention that unifies the play's disparate elements.<sup>170</sup>

Administrators as a caste (and rhetoric as a discipline) deployed in the same manner as the characterisation of a soldier, may be used to examine conflict, and are consistently employed in Shakespeare's plays to indicate higher philosophical debates concerning ultimate meaning and systems of implementation and representation. While this study of the role of the administrator incorporates the tension between Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of value, there is a stronger potential reading of the seemingly incongruent Act V, Scene 1 ('The Moon Shines bright...') which as an examination of value owes more to Mercantilist conceptions of inherent worth. The cosmological subject of the aria may reference the Scholastic San Bernardion's *On Contracts and Usury* (1431), which describes how the heavens will 'cast down' usurers.<sup>171</sup> (More speculatively, the name of Antonio, then, perhaps

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<sup>170</sup> Interestingly, this thematic concern may also be seen in the (much later) writings of Hegel (1789 - 1802): 'Another question extraneous to the concept of the state is which particular power is responsible for legislation, and what relative share the various estates or citizens in general have in this process. Likewise irrelevant is the character of the courts of law — whether, in the various instances of the administration of justice, the members inherit their office, are appointed to it by the supreme authority, or are freely entrusted with it by the citizenry or nominated by the courts themselves. It is also immaterial what the scope of a specific court's jurisdiction is, whether this has been determined by chance, whether there is a common supreme court for the entire state, etc.' G.G. W. F. Hegel, 'The German Constitution', in *Political Writings*, trans. by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Page number? Shakespeare was clearly tempted (or at least reflects the temptation) to depict society via broad distinctions — itself a methodology which implies essential differences. Shakespeare uses the intermediary characters within these plays (Holofernes and Nathaniel, Puck, Ariel, Balthazar), and specifically the *language* of these characters, to imply strong social divisions without essential difference, as the intermediary characters interact liberally.

<sup>171</sup> 'Accordingly, all the saints and all the angels of paradise cry then against him [the usurer], saying "To hell, to hell, to hell." Also the heavens with their stars cry out, saying, "To the fire, to the fire, to the fire." The planets also clamor, "To the depths, to the depths, to the depths." Bernodino, *De Contractibus*, sermon 45, 3:3, for more see Rothbard and Miskimin, *The Economy of Later Renaissance Europe: 1460-1600*. Also see Raymond de Roover, *San Bernardion of Siena and Saint Antonio of Florence, the Two Great Thinkers of the Middle Ages* (Boston: Baker Liberty, 1967)., ; and Alegandro Chafuen, *Christians for Freedom: Late Scholastic Economics* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1986).

becomes retrospectively significant as a reference to the 1446 Archbishop of Florence Antonius (known as ‘little Anthony’, or ‘Antonio’), who extrapolated Bernardion’s arguments to justify intervention in mercantile affairs, condemning monopoly practices – practices populist anti-Semitism equated with Judaism and usury.<sup>172</sup>) The scene acts as a justification for Balthazar’s intervention through allegory, and Balthazar represents the means by which natural order is re-introduced into the human praxis of trade, relationships, and religious practice.

The aforementioned three plays explore the function of rhetoric within society at a point where the concept of rhetoric moves beyond issues of speech ethics, incorporating a greater awareness of the impact that cultural forces have upon relationships and consciousness. Shakespeare’s depiction of the role played by language, whether in law or politics, is both consistent with the approach to rhetoric as one of the ‘seven liberal arts’,<sup>173</sup> and consistent with Baconian distrust.<sup>174</sup> Within the play, language is intertwined with social duty and with concepts of absolute knowledge. The use of rhetoric and the portrayal of the administrator are symbiotic, integral parts of this project. Taking the rhetorical tropes characteristic of More’s *Utopia* and Machiavelli’s *The Prince* as a point of departure, *The Merchant of Venice* contains a dynamic between the two ‘styles’ of rhetoric, in which Balthazar, as the administrator, represents the triumph of rhetoric as a tool for good, by representing this manner of rhetoric as the external influence which (via Balthazar)

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Antonius’ translation of *Summa Theology* published ‘the parts of prudence, if we take them properly, are the prudence whereby a man rules himself, and the prudence whereby a man governs a multitude... the multitude which is united together for some particular purpose; thus an army is gathered together to fight, and the prudence that governs this is called "military." ... such again is the multitude of a city or kingdom, the ruling principle of which is "regnative prudence" in the ruler, and "political prudence," simply so called, in the subjects.’ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 2nd Edn (London: Burns Oates & Washbourne Ltd., 1920). Antonius has been referred to as the last of the Scholastics due to his approach to such supposedly humanistic concerns, as mercantilism, the family and commerce.

<sup>172</sup> Richard Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence: An Economic and Social History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982).

<sup>173</sup> ‘Mediaeval education was built on the foundation of the ‘Seven liberal arts’; grammar, dialectic (logic), and rhetoric’ were the idealised foundations for the education of free citizens. Depicted by Martainus Capella as being the seven bridesmaids to the marriage of Mercury and Philologia were Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric, Geometry, Arithmetic, Astronomy, and Music’. R. H. Robins, *A Short History of Linguistics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), p. 135.

<sup>174</sup> For more on the shift in perceptions regarding Rhetoric - from exploration into truth through meaning to art of deception – see Catherine Mills, ‘Aspects of Distrust of Rhetoric’, University of Birmingham, (1980).

triumphs. That is to say, Shakespeare uses the characterisation of the administrator as a space within which to examine the role of governance and its implementation.

Within *The Merchant of Venice*, Shylock is the means by which the rhetoric of the civic entity and the rhetoric servicing the individual interact. The administrator indicates the influence of forces beyond the drama primarily, at this stage of the administrator character's development, through rhetoric. In this regard, the administrator character in Renaissance literature and drama is arguably a more fully rounded character than is often the case in later variants (the various figures in Kafka's stories, for example), to the extent that the administrator character may be viewed as a fully individuated character in his or her own right. This is particularly the case with Portia, who becomes the administrator character as an alter ego, in the form of Balthazar, through which the true nature of the powers influencing the play – the powers of civil society rather than that of Shylock's revenge and a Hobbesian state of nature – are revealed, and the balance of civil society and the idealised natural order of peace and courtly love re-asserted. Shylock's rhetoric acts to further his own goals, a fact which is raised as his character's primary motivation. That Portia is arguing to save the friend of her love indicates the converse: she is arguing for civil society, again invoking Aristotelian and Thomist ideals of a natural law which supersedes laws of custom and contract. Thus, within their area of rhetorical exchange, Portia as Balthazar represents a legitimate rhetoric of reification, and Shylock represents rhetoric as the means to one's own base gratification. This manifestation of administration may be traced from the language adopted by courtly hand books, to the pedant, to debates concerning artifice and nature, to the rhetoric of power and the influence of language upon commerce and global trade. This manifestation culminates with *The Merchant of Venice*'s examination of the application and continuation of power by a ruler, and asks whether this is to be considered an issue for rhetoric or ethics.

Just as Shakespeare greatly influenced subsequent theatrical traditions, these depictions also fed into popular conceptions of institutions of governance.<sup>175</sup>

Inventing a new means for depicting power as a means to construct this paradox,

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<sup>175</sup> See below in relation to *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which the Scottish enlightenment's interest in institutions (influenced by the manner of their depiction in Shakespeare), influenced the conception of contingent entities and institutions depicted in the works of Dostoevsky.



Shakespeare thus empowers the text by permeating it with the ‘contradictions [that] are the very means by which power achieves its aims’ and, as with the Duke in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and the Judge in *The Merchant of Venice*, thus ‘theorises the process of inversion whereby art and politics end up in this mutually authorising relationship’.<sup>176</sup> This chapter has attempted to demonstrate how Shakespeare’s use of the administrator character was, in this way, a key component in the underlying conceptual framework of his texts, whilst simultaneously providing a dramatic device to drive the plot. As such, I argue that Shakespeare’s administrators were as influential on later authors in this regard as were other aspects of his texts. Administrator characters are used by Shakespeare to embody beliefs about the forces influencing the world, and these representations are as varied as the content of his plays. Even pageantry and tradition are incorporated via fully rounded characters. Shakespeare both created new methods of using characters within an administrative role, and perfected earlier literary methods of characterising these conceptualisations of wider influences. Later authors continued to incorporate this valuable character into their texts, adapting them to better represent theories and imaginings of the powers influencing the world outside the text’s parameters. In the following chapters, this thesis will attempt to demonstrate how the administrator character comes, thereby, to persist as a constant and invaluable figure in later literary works.

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<sup>176</sup> Leonard Tennerhouse, ‘Strategies of State and Political Plays’, in *Political Shakespeare*, ed. by Alan Sinfield and Johnathan Dollimore (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 112.

**'You will be like God knowing good and evil': Mephistopheles and the changing ideals of progress**

Just as organisations are compelled to adapt to technical advance, changes in social attitudes and political systems, so, too, many historically-minded critics and theorists, from Lukacs to Moretti, have argued, art responds by developing new forms, such as the novel. These forms appear as, in some sense, innovations, often developed to express in new ways the effect of such changes in wider society on the individuated human experience. Such instances in which art appears to reflect broader historical changes include those at the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth century, which allowed shared experiences to span previously impermeable boundaries (such as those of geography, ethnicity, religion and class) — changes referred to in the broadest sense as 'modernity'.

The notion that art, in this way, reflects (and reflects upon) historical change is central to the concept of an 'administrator character', as — so this thesis suggests — in many texts, it is through this character that the bulk of social changes which concern the relationship between the individual and collective institutions are represented. Indeed, there are direct comparisons which may be drawn between, for example, Shakespeare's use of characterisation to explore sixteenth-century conceptions of the role of governance and implementation, and the emergence of the commodity form in opposition to the sanctity of ideals, and Goethe's use of characterisation to explore some similar themes in *Faust*. However, while thematically and in manner of portrayal, Goethe's administrator characters are comparable with those of the renaissance 'humanist' representations examined in earlier chapters, *Faust* is, of course, not a direct chronological continuation of renaissance humanism. Instead, the treatment of renaissance humanism is, in *Faust*'s first half, romanticised, while, in its second half, these differences are developed to great effect to introduce and explore emerging forms of social and political modernity. One of the key means by which this is done is, I argue, through Goethe's characterisation of administration.

In what follows, reading the character of Mephistopheles in Goethe's *Faust* as an administrator character suggests, in fact, that there is a distinctive quality to Goethe's use of this mode of characterisation which reflects wider and more diffuse changes taking place in art during this period. More interestingly, the means by which Mephistopheles, as the primary means by which the character of Faust is able to embark upon his quest of 'endless striving', appears to facilitate this quest is depicted through a number of innovative literary techniques. By using the text's principal administrator character, Mephistopheles, as a prism through which to view the text, I argue that *Faust* presents a web of impressions of a transitional period in which Goethe is one of many authors who began to question the monopoly that a romantic conception of classical and Renaissance ideas had over their respective cultures, and attempted to capture this sense of change aesthetically by clothing it in the symbolism of the past in order to express new hopes for the future.

Goethe's thematic incorporation of historical intellectual movements is evident within his depiction of character, and in particular, the character of Mephistopheles. As such, Mephistopheles incorporates a particular impression of collective experiences in Europe (Germany in particular) as it entered the nineteenth century. *Part One*, written in the first decades of the nineteenth century, and published in 1808, serves as a retrospective romantic portrayal of Renaissance culture and the continued influence of theology. *Part Two*, written towards the end of Goethe's life, anticipates the effects of industrialisation, and offers an idealised aesthetic which embraces these changes. Just as Chesterton argued that Chaucer's literature contained the author's critique of his own era's historical perspective, in which 'life was conceived as a Dance, and after that time life was conceived as a Race', I will argue that Goethe's *Faust* begins with the 'Renaissance' and uses plot and character exposition to rapidly move towards the elaboration of new, more properly modern concepts of eternal striving.<sup>177</sup> As such, *Faust* surveys the cultural environment at the turn of the century, contextualises this environment within the era's own idealised notions of the past, and then uses the same symbolism to allegorise contemporary social changes.<sup>178</sup> In this chapter, I argue, in particular, that the figure

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<sup>177</sup> G. K. Chesterton, *Chaucer* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1932), pp. 158-9.

<sup>178</sup> The early to mid 1800s saw multiple social changes across the whole of Europe, which may well have had a 'domino effect' upon each other. In 1803, Napoleon imposes the Convention of Artlenburg; from 1804 –1815,

Mephistopheles is used to incorporate a series of impressions of the new organisational structures of capitalist or bourgeois modernity and the growing influence of certain institutions which developed in symbiosis with industrialisation. It is thus Mephistopheles who provides both Faust and the audience with, to use Carlyle's phrase, an 'impression of worldly-mindedness', by allowing Mephistopheles to become a characterised representation which both incorporates and adapts the mundane processes of the world to fit the artistic demands of the text, thereby allowing Faust to represent the aesthetic quest for 'Inquiry and Endeavour'.<sup>179</sup>

The earliest known publication of the story of a doctor who sells his soul occurred, in English, in 1592 by an unknown author and translator.<sup>180</sup> The plot of Christopher Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* is very similar to this chapbook, known as the *Faustbuch* (although probably known to Goethe as *The English Faust Book*) and deviates in terms of form and structure only in that Marlowe omits or merges minor details contained within the individual chapters. Indeed, Marlowe's version of the story is closer to the *Faustbuch* than Goethe's is to Marlowe's. The *Faustbuch* presents the story as an 'example every Christian may learn [... to] go not astray, but take God always before our eyes'.<sup>181</sup> Marlowe's play differs from this source material in the artistic interpretation of the implications of Faustus' dramatic journey. Marlowe's Faustus experiences a developmental character arc, in which he first views himself as something of a Prometheus, motivated to attain forbidden knowledge ('Here tire my brains to gain a deity' line 60).<sup>182</sup> Later, Faustus comes to realise he has traded his soul for temporary powers and, worse, appears to feel that he has squandered

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Napoleonic Wars are held; in 1806, the Holy Roman Empire is formally dissolved; 1812–1814 witnesses the War of the Sixth Coalition, which includes German states; in 1813, the Battle of the Nations occurs at Leipzig and Napoleon is defeated; in 1815, the Congress of Vienna and German Confederation is formed; in 1817, the Wartburg festival is held; in 1837, there is the Protest of the Göttingen Seven; and from 1848–1849, The Revolutions (of 1848) in the German states occur.

<sup>179</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *The Carlyle Anthology*, ed. by Edward Barrett (New York: Holt, 1881), p. 33.

<sup>180</sup> Anonymous, 'Faustbuch - the History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus', in *Doctor Faustus*, ed. by David Scott Kastan (New York: Norton Critical Edition, 1592) (p. 182).

<sup>181</sup> Anonymous, 'Faustbuch - the History of the Damnable Life and Deserved Death of Doctor John Faustus' (p. 209).

<sup>182</sup> Christopher Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, ed. by David Scott Kastan (New York: Norton Critical Edition, 2005), p. 58.

them. Faustus' inability to acknowledge the difference between his original conception of the pact, ('A sound magician is a demigod'; line 59)<sup>183</sup> and the paltry *actuality* of its outcomes until it is too late is predicted in the play's opening. The introductory Chorus explicitly compares Faustus to Icarus, in that his 'waxen wings did mount above his reach' (line 20).<sup>184</sup> Boas reads these 'inter-textual', self-reflexive interpretations of the play as revealing that Marlowe's intention was to use Faustus to embody 'those qualities of intellectual curiosity, passion for beauty and ardour for classical antiquity which were dominant in Marlowe himself',<sup>185</sup> thereby exploring the limits of Marlowe's own beliefs. If it is true that Marlowe took the *Faustbuch* and used it to explore distinctly 'Renaissance humanist' concerns, Goethe may then equally be read as taking *Marlowe's interpretation* of the original Chapbook, and building upon Marlowe's themes to reflect his own interests and concerns at the turn of the eighteenth into the nineteenth century.

Famously, Pushkin described Goethe's *Faust* as 'an *Illiad* of modern life', implying the play had the potential to historically define 'modern life' as completely as *The Iliad* did for the classical world.<sup>186</sup> Franco Moretti, in his *The Modern Epic*, reads *Faust* specifically as an epic of *modern* life in what is, however, a rather stronger sense:

Rather than planning an epic poem and rationally preparing the means of a tragedy — a character with a strong epic potential. And so, after decades of hesitation, he eventually put together an epic poem. With respect to the dominant historiographical models, the relationship between means and ends is precisely reversed: the tools, the concrete technical possibilities, are everything; the project, the ideology, the poetics — nothing. And this, let it

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<sup>183</sup> Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, p. 58.

<sup>184</sup> Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, p. 56.

<sup>185</sup> Frederick S. Boas, 'Introduction', in *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, ed. by Frederick S. Boas (London: Methuen and Co., 1932) (p. 211).

<sup>186</sup> Georg Lukacs, *Goethe and His Age* (London: Merlin Press, 1968), p. 157. Pushkin's own 1828 'A New Scene between Faust and Mephistopheles' satirises Faust's relationship with Margaret as sentimental, but this satire was written before the completed Part Two. Pushkin's '*Iliad*' comparison may be read as a reappraisal of the play made after reading it in the context of the growing artistic awareness of socialist-materialist ideas. Pushkin's reading appears to incorporate an awareness of how art may be used to 'stereotype' an era, and is, therefore, not wholly flattering.

be clear, is not a defect. Quite the contrary. Because plans and poetics function (perhaps) when inside a stable formal paradigm: in times of 'normal' literature, so to speak. But if paradigms are shifting they are a waste of time, because change is not planned: it is the fruit of the most irresponsible and free — the blindest — rhetorical experimentation.<sup>187</sup>

Moretti's point here is that, to the *modern* ethos, it is the process (the 'journey', as it were) which is more important than the goal (the 'destination'), and that in the *modern epic*, the process is itself the goal. Goethe's interpretation of his artistic endeavour, despite being firmly rooted within the idealised Renaissance revered by sentimentalism, became increasingly divergent from the sentimental ideal as his literary career advanced. This change had peaked by the time he produced the finished *Faust*, which, when read in its entirety, is a play where the 'shock of the new' begins to eclipse the desire to pay homage to the past or to tradition. Moretti argues, in this vein, that Goethe breaks with Marlowe's characterisation (and, by implication, those of Renaissance literature) by depicting a Faust who 'wills not to will: to share the destiny of his species, rather than intervene in it', to embody the 'experience allotted to the whole of mankind'.<sup>188</sup> At the same time, Goethe's writing style began to formulate techniques which would later be employed by authors to express what Marx describes as a specifically modern sense of that drowning of 'the heavenly ecstasies of pious fanaticism, of chivalrous enthusiasm, of philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation'.<sup>189</sup> It is in this way, Marshall Berman suggests, that the text captured, at an early moment, the sense the 'public shares [of] the feeling of living in a revolutionary age [... whilst] [a]t the same time, the nineteenth-century modern public can remember what it is like to live, materially and spiritually, in worlds that are not modern at all'.<sup>190</sup>

Across the two parts of *Faust*, Goethe increasingly seems to emphasise a sense of 'truthfulness' in art as being able, in line with this, to accurately portray the impact of social–material factors upon the individual. Within Goethe's *Faust*, the play's

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<sup>187</sup> Franco Moretti, *Modern Epic: The World System from Goethe to Garcia Marquez*. trans. by Quentin Hoare (London and New York: Verso, 1997), p. 19.

<sup>188</sup> Moretti, *Modern Epic: The World System from Goethe to Garcia Marquez*, p. 17.

<sup>189</sup> *The Marx and Engels Reader*, ed. by Tucker, p. 475.

<sup>190</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air* (London and New York: Verso, 1983), p. 17.

sense of what is possible and what is 'true' is contextualised within a symbolic context. The theatrical conventions of classical theatre, the Romantic trope of the spiritual quest, the language of the Renaissance, and the imagery of contemporary protestant theology, are all employed to express the aesthetic and social impacts of the era's material changes. The play's central conceit of the pact allows these themes to be covered without a sense of obligation to provide clear answers, allowing Faust's story to remain a useful metaphor for the cost of progress. In particular, in abandoning classical (or neo-classical) and Renaissance (or sentimentalist) conventions, Goethe is relieved of an obligation to pass a 'Christian' judgment upon the central character, as well as to pursue those aspects of a morality play which seek to provoke action on the part of the audience. Whereas Marlowe's Faust is dismembered, ('limbs all torn asunder by the hand of death', line 6),<sup>191</sup> Goethe's Faust dies of old age, and at the last moment, his soul is borne from Mephistopheles' grasp by angels ('They've spirited it slyly from my writ' line 11830)<sup>192</sup> and receives redemption. Consequently, as Moretti argues, if Marlowe's Mephistopheles is 'a mere executor, devoid of creativity or autonomy', Goethe's Mephistopheles may be seen as an artistic innovation in the role of an administrating character.<sup>193</sup>

In fact, Mephistopheles' role in Goethe's text is, first and foremost, to reflect tangible manifestations of the era's newly emerging social orders and structures. For example, in 'Pleasance' (Scene IV), Mephistopheles provides a source of income for the Emperor by spreading the fallacious belief that the kingdom has untapped gold reserves, allowing for paper money to be created which 'circulates like gold of true assay' (line 6083)<sup>194</sup> founded entirely upon 'confidence' (line 6119).<sup>195</sup> Similarly, Mephistopheles acts as the conduit of 'modern' applications of knowledge and progress when, for instance, he fulfils Faust's desire to shape the land itself, to 'drain

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<sup>191</sup> Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, p. 121.

<sup>192</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*. trans. by Walter Ardt, ed. by Cyrus Hamlin, 1st edn (London and New York: Norton Critical Edition, 1976), p. 300. All quotes taken from this edition unless otherwise noted. Ardt's translation, made at the time of the edition's compilation, holds that the ideas and delivery of *Faust* are purposely entwined and thus reflects this thesis' focuses on precisely regarding the use of characterised delivery. Ardt provides extensive interpretive notes for the choices and tenor of his translation, and as such the ideas and their delivery are more the focus of analysis than the use of language itself.

<sup>193</sup> Moretti, *Modern Epic: The World System from Goethe to Garcia Marquez*, p. 17.

<sup>194</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 153.

<sup>195</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 154.

this stagnant pool of ills [...] open room to live for millions [...] Lush fallow then to man and cattle yields' (line 11560).<sup>196</sup> Having Mephistopheles 'account' for the insertion of these 'modern' forces seems, then, to keep the play's commentary pertinent, whilst allowing Goethe to focus upon the aesthetic and experiential aspects of these changes through his central character, Faust himself.

A closet drama, *Faust* was published in two parts, *Faust, Der Tragödie erster Teil* and *Faust, Der Tragödie zweiter Teil*. Prior to this publication, there appeared a partial printing in 1790 of *Faust*, which was, however, only a fragment. The earliest forms of the work, known as the *Urfaust*, were developed between 1772 and 1775; however, the details of that development are no longer entirely clear. Goethe completed a preliminary version of *Part One* in 1806, soon after his 'storm and stress' (*Sturm und Drang*) period, characterised by the treatment of theatre as a 'tool' to fortify the individual in the context of civil war. The 1808 publication was followed by the revised 1828–1829 edition, which was the last to be edited by Goethe himself. Goethe finished writing *Faust Part Two* in 1832, the year of his death, and the text appeared posthumously. In contrast to *Faust Part One*, the focus here is no longer on the soul of Faust, which has been sold to the devil, but rather on behavioural phenomena such as psychology, history and politics. The second part constituted the principal occupation of Goethe's last years, by which point Goethe had embarked upon his goal of a 'national literature', which would speak to and for the polycentric nature of the German principalities, and in particular, the changes in German culture under the influence of industrial progress.<sup>197</sup> Despite the readings of Heine and Mme De Stael, who argued that 'the German people is itself that learned Doctor Faustus' (who, after Goethe's death, saw a 'falling off, a decadence'), and Wilhelm Dilthey, who argued that Faust is intended to represent the 'spirit' or mind of the German nation, the themes of *Faust* clearly aspire, as they progress, to a

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<sup>196</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 254.

<sup>197</sup> Before its unification in 1871, Germany consisted of 294 states or 2303 territories and jurisdictions under the overall authority of the Holy Roman Emperor. Unlike France or England, where centralised royal power had been gradually established, Germany remained divided into smaller principalities along with many free cities and ecclesiastical states with elected prince-bishops. There were even independent monasteries, like that at Fulda. Goethe's attitude towards this polycentrism was celebratory and saw it as a source of cultural strength. This cultural diversity would have certainly informed his emphasis upon the relationship with 'earth' over 'state' – the 'eternal feminine' of Mother Germany.



universality beyond the limits of the nation.<sup>198</sup> *Faust* is a play whose construction spans a tide of revolution throughout Europe and a succession of major technological advances. By analysing the role of the principal administrator character within a play whose major themes concern progress and empowerment, I aim to demonstrate how, as such, one may gain an understanding of the period's ideas about, and attitudes towards, the agents of collective bodies and corporate intermediaries, and how these differ from their conceptualisation and representation during the era of Renaissance humanism which was considered in the previous two chapters.

### 'Past and pure nothing are at last the same!' Mephistopheles' role in ideological unshackling

In *Part One*, Goethe's interweaving references to experience, rhetoric, and *Geisteswissenschaft* - a collective term for the subjects of philosophy, theology, law, and the classics - represent more than mere ideas within *Faust*, serving, in fact, to represent forces that the characters are portrayed as initially *expecting* to affect their interrelations and the outcomes of their actions. Despite the description of Faust as The Lord's 'servant' who will be 'guided' ('The gardener knows by the young tree's green haze | That bloom and fruit will grace it down the years' line 309), it is to the Earth Spirit (possibly the 'primal force' (line 325) from which Mephistopheles is permitted to 'estrangle this spirit': Faust) that Faust turns to ease his 'demented quest' (line 302) for absolute knowledge — revealing how, at this stage, Faust is still striving to achieve a sense of certainty and to discover unquestionable foundations for ideas such as 'absolute knowledge', 'true love', and 'truth'. The inherent contradiction in Faust's actions (seen in his turning to a spirit as a source of answers rather than redoubling his study of theology, which, were his faith to be true, would be the source of all knowledge) already reduces God to one of many potential sources of knowledge rather than a point of absolute reference. Mephistopheles' appearance may therefore be seen, initially, as continuing the message of the Earth Spirit — as both another source of dubiously authentic knowledge, and as a questionable means of realising it through application. This is particularly

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<sup>198</sup>*The Romantic School and Other Essays: Heinrich Heine*, ed. by Robert C. Holub and Jost Hermand (New York: Continuum, 2002), p. 41.

interesting, as while Mephistopheles at first appears to strongly parallel the Earth Spirit, as the play progresses Mephistopheles, both through the character's use of language and how Mephistopheles effects the world, appears to shift away from the mystical towards the practical and material, as we shall see.

The encounter with the Earth Spirit is followed by Mephistopheles' masquerading as a professor, advising a student to favour the affectation of knowledge rather than learning for knowledge's sake:

‘Words are good things to be debated, | With words are systems  
generated, | In words are systems generated, | In words belief is safely  
vested’ line 1997).

Mephistopheles' subversion of education here has an important contextualising effect upon the play, by effectively delineating the play's apparent chronological setting apart from the thematic core of the play of eternal striving, which is presented as current and immediate; and by representing the Renaissance's debates concerning the social purpose of rhetoric, speech ethics, and the humanist project as dated and discredited. Meaning is presented in *Faust* as informed by the past, influenced and shaped by natural constraints — yet as also fundamentally undetermined, and without teleology. Faust is thereby himself presented as being able to define his own priorities, his own ideas and, ultimately, to cut a path towards a revolutionary criterion for salvation, in accordance with Kant's broader conception of Enlightenment as '*...the human being's emergence from his self-incurred minority*'. Minority is inability to make use of one's own understanding without direction from another. This minority is *self-incurred* when its cause lies not in lack of understanding but in lack of resolution and courage to use it without direction from another'.<sup>199</sup>

Faust is described as pursuing ‘philosophy, Jurisprudence, and medicine [...] and [...] theology’ (line 353), the four traditional faculties of the medieval university.<sup>200</sup> Later, Faust is described as Doctor of *Geisteswissenschaft* — a division of faculty in German Universities that originated in the nineteenth century and included the same

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<sup>199</sup> Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?', in *Immanuel Kant. Practical Philosophy*, ed. by Mary J. Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) (p. 1).

<sup>200</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 10.

subjects; yet the term appears to have been contemporary and may, possibly, have been incorporated into the play during one of its later re-writes.<sup>201</sup> The roots of this discipline of *Geisteswissenschaft* lay in German idealism, in particular Hegel's concept of a '*Volksgeist*': the common 'spirit', or perhaps 'mind', of a people. This was paired with Goethe's passion for the fortification of a wholly German cultural bedrock, as opposed to a polymorphic importation of the northern European renaissance. Goethe, in a letter to Schiller (Weimar, 27 June, 1797), describes how he 'may apply our new theory of the epic poem' to *Faust*, referring to the short essay 'On Epic and Dramatic Poetry' which had been written by Goethe and Schiller, in which they advocated experiments in a uniquely Germanic mode of epic — akin to an adaptation of the Renaissance humanist ideal tailored for the Germanic people to serve as a tool for their cultural coming of age, or '*Geistesgeschichte*'.<sup>202</sup> Faust's character may then be viewed as incorporating both an exploration of the human condition *per se* and an attempt to establish a literary mode that would provide a more historically-specific expression of the German renaissance zeitgeist — a literary expression, that is, of *Geisteswissenschaft*, employing literature 'to bring them [the people] forward that others might receive the same impression'.<sup>203</sup> As such, *Faust* may well constitute the culmination of Goethe's role in the construction of 'philosophical poetry' with which he assisted the transition from a Renaissance stance of '*Humanität*' (intended to act in opposition to barbarism, a goal shared by Weimar classicism) towards the more specifically Germanic concept of a cultural *Bildung* or self-cultivation,<sup>204</sup> intended to facilitate a culture which exalted the goal of a harmonious development of individuality. Subverting the traditional morality tale of 'Faust' still present in Marlowe's play, Goethe transformed it into an allegory illustrating the potential of a new aesthetic which, while incorporating the best of medieval ideals, would embrace the modern, and present the new lack of moral absolutes as the freedom of self-determination.

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<sup>201</sup> More frequently used in plural form *Geisteswissenschaften*.

<sup>202</sup> Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann: Being Appreciations and Criticisms* (New York: M. Walter Dunne, 2005).

<sup>203</sup> Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann: Being Appreciations and Criticisms*, p. 416.

<sup>204</sup> The ideal of self cultivation represents a conceptual counterpart to northern European Humanism as '*Humanität*', and the terms may be read as conceptually synonymous.

In the *Doctrine of Colours*, Goethe rejected Newtonian and Pythagorean concepts of a mathematic science: 'For merely looking at something cannot get us anywhere. All seeing becomes contemplation; all contemplation, musing [*ein Sinn*en]; all musing, combination [*ein Verknupfen*]; and so it can be said that every attentive look into the world involves theorizing'.<sup>205</sup> Such an interpretation of apparently objective phenomena is entirely in keeping with the problematic representation of knowledge in *Faust*, and the tension between the central characters. Faust cannot trust Mephistopheles due to Mephistopheles' motives, yet Faust is dependent upon Mephistopheles as a source of knowledge and action. Unlike Marlowe's Faust whose pact is a straightforward trade ('That I [Mephistopheles] shall wait on Faustus while he lives [...] So he will buy my service with his Soul' (line 30)<sup>206</sup> and 'When first by flattery you lull me into a smug complacency [...] Let that day be the last for me' line 1697)<sup>207</sup> Faust's contract is conditional, an effective wager of Faust's soul against Mephistopheles' ability to 'lull' him. As Faust's foil, Mephistopheles' character appears to adapt in order to provide Faust with whichever oppositional external influence(s) would best serve Goethe in his artistic endeavour to portray 'the choice' for eternal striving as the ultimate gestalt of self-determination and acceptance of limitations. Faust is both tempted into the pact and willingly seeks it, yet Mephistopheles acknowledges that Faust is, in many respects, fulfilling an impulse which is beyond his control: 'Fate has endowed him with a forward-driving | Impetuousness that reaches past all sights' (line 1856).<sup>208</sup> Mephistopheles hints as much to Faust directly with 'You are, all told — just what you are' (line 1806) and 'You still remain just what you are' (line 1809). This 'hint' by Mephistopheles is also a confounding of Faust's motivations for entering into the pact which Mephistopheles offers: 'I'll give you what no man has seen before' (line 1674). Faust challenges Mephistopheles to satisfy him, and therefore he does not 'sell his soul' so much as he wagers it in a bet, wagering that Mephistopheles lacks the ability to comprehend Faust's 'human mind in its high striving' (line 1676). Mephistopheles subsequently becomes a threefold administrator in the sense that he administrates

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<sup>205</sup> Hjalmar Hegge, 'Transcending Darwinism in the Spirit of Goethe's Science: A Philosophical Perspective on the Works of Adolf Portmann', *Newsletter of the Society for the Evolution of Science*, 12.2 (1996), pp. 1-26.

<sup>206</sup> Marlowe, *Doctor Faustus*, p. 69.

<sup>207</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 38.

<sup>208</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 49.

Faust's longing for experience, he administrates the tempting and subsequent attempt to gratify Faust for God, and he administrates the world ('to fall in step with me for life's adventure' line 1644) for Faust.

Faust and Mephistopheles do not so much form a 'pact' in Goethe's interpretation, as a wager. Contract law at the time was based on the principle expressed in the Latin phrase *pacta sunt servanda* (usually translated as 'pacts must be kept', but more literally 'agreements are to be kept'). The legal precedent for contract law to eliminate deliberate attempts to encourage misinterpretations (of the kind arguably perpetrated by Mephistopheles) was not established until 1892.<sup>209</sup> Contract law was, at the time, as such, a wager with written proof, precisely of the kind which Mephistopheles demands, and the pact reveals the extent to which Goethe was more interested in the concept of a pact which is both binding and liberating, rather than with the social realities of contracts as they actually existed at the time. In this way, the pact, and Faust's triumph over it, encapsulates Goethe's view of the broader social and cultural 'pact' being made with development and change during the period covered by the play's writing, and Goethe's hopes for how mankind would respond to the dual limitations and possibilities these changes would present.

Where Faust and Mephistopheles diverge is in that while both are willing and complicit parties in this process, Mephistopheles is the facilitator (an 'impression of worldly-mindedness',<sup>210</sup>) to both Faust's process, *and his own*, not to mention the

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<sup>209</sup> The Carbolic Smoke Ball Company made a product called the 'smoke ball'. It claimed to be a cure for influenza and a number of other diseases. The Company published advertisements in *the Pall Mall Gazette* and other newspapers on 13 November, 1891: '£100 reward will be paid by the Carbolic Smoke Ball Company to any person who contracts the increasing epidemic influenza colds, or any disease caused by taking cold, after having used the ball three times daily for two weeks, according to the printed directions supplied with each ball.' Mrs Louisa Elizabeth Carlill saw the advertisement, bought one of the balls and used it three times daily for nearly two months until she contracted the flu on 17 January, 1892. She claimed £100 from the Carbolic Smoke Ball Company. They ignored two letters from her husband, who had trained as a solicitor. On a third request for her reward, they replied with an anonymous letter that if it is used properly, the company had complete confidence in the smoke ball's efficacy, but 'to protect themselves against all fraudulent claims' they would need her to come to their office to use the ball each day under the supervision of the secretary. Mrs Carlill brought a claim to court. The barristers representing her argued that the advertisement and her reliance on it was a contract between her and the company, and so they ought to pay. The company argued it was not a serious contract. See: *Carlill v Carbolic Smoke Ball Company* [1892] EWCA Civ 1 (07 December 1892). See Gary Slapper and David Kelly, *The English Legal System*, 4 edn (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 90.

<sup>210</sup> *The Carlyle Anthology*, ed. by Barrett, p. 218.

process which God both permits and orders. While Faust remains consistent in his depiction of restlessness and dissatisfaction, Mephistopheles' portrayal reflects his role as facilitator, or administrator, and as such *it develops along with Faust's own perception of the nature of his pact*. The contract between Faust and Mephistopheles, which follows from the 'contract' between God and Mephistopheles, acts as the symbol of this integral and pervasive dynamic which is itself key to the play's use of references to existing ideas and concepts. These, collectively, appear to express Goethe's understanding of his era as one fundamentally in transition, represented in his work through the imagery, ideals and stylistic traits Renaissance and a proffered future in which the aesthetic ideal of eternal striving is as equally informative as rhetoric was for the Renaissance. The pact may be therefore viewed as an artefact of this 'second nature' of modernity (to borrow a phrase from Lukács)<sup>211</sup> which appears to hold most sway over human experience (or is, at least, presented as such within the play). As is clear, Mephistopheles gains much of his aura of power and foreboding through his willingness to cheat, misinterpret, lie and fool — situating him outside of the bounds of conventional society. As such, Faust's deal may be read in more broadly symbolic terms as a relic of the past which is modernised and reconstructed through application, as it combines the dual imagery of the Renaissance's emphasis on one's word and courtly fealty, and the symbolism of the 'deal' which the modern individual makes with economic and social apparatuses (the 'mechanics of conformity') in which the critical reasoning of the individual has the potential to be lost. (Especially, in Faust's case, the powers of negation: 'what to all mankind is apportioned | I mean to savour in my own self's core' line 1770.) This reasoning is in danger of being lost within that 'society' which Mephistopheles (as the administrator) creates in order to become the intermediary through which Faust experiences the world, and it is Faust's ability to 're-construct' the contract which

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<sup>211</sup> Lukacs presents art as reflecting subjective experience of changes in the means of production. Lukacs described the epic as the genre of 'first nature', 'the historico-philosophical objectification of man's alienation from his own constructs', while the 'second nature' art form of the novel was a 'projection of man's experience of his self-made environment as a prison', representing a further stage of alienation, whereby the author reflects institutionalised alienation from his or her nature (as *homofaber*) and society's default order (communism). This institutional alienation predisposes Faust into entering into an arrangement in which he depends upon Mephistopheles for his fulfilment. Gyorgy Lukacs, selections from "Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat", *An Anthology of Western Marxism*, ed. by Roger S. Gottlieb, trans. Rodney Livingstone (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 57-59.

saves him. The contract may therefore be understood as a rather loose metaphor for those aspects of the past which may be re-crafted to a new purpose as the world changes; relics such as art, virtue, or even love. Mephistopheles (in this reading) presents the established and alienated structures which attempt to *stifle* such changes.

Goethe depicts the experiences of his characters as having the capacity to determine the plot itself. This idea lies at the heart of Faust's pact with Mephistopheles, as it is Faust's subjective experience that will determine the extent to which the contract has been fulfilled. The ambiguity of the contract is itself a retrospective comment upon the importance rhetoric appeared to have within Renaissance societies, and Faust's ultimate triumph may be read as representing an unshackling from these concepts.<sup>212</sup> Rhetoric was a discipline promoted by advocates of Renaissance humanism; yet, in the absence of established, international legal discourse (compounded by the proliferation of legal systems and laws throughout the multiple princedoms of central Europe) or shared citations of precedent, the contract, by default, exists within specific circumstances, and cannot be 'universally' binding. Goethe's portrayal of Faust's and Mephistopheles' power relations contained within the pact is itself a product of the transition between Renaissance humanism and modernism, as the failed project of the Renaissance man, Faust, wagers the promise of self-actualisation (central to the enlightenment project) in order to experience what Adorno and Horkheimer call the 'most agonising lust' of 'the curse of irresistible progress'.<sup>213</sup>

Faust's last wish, which Mephistopheles fails to fulfil, is to quell the sea's 'self upon self upwelling [...] wave held on, then rolling backward'; indicative of a desire to dictate natural phenomena, and to control the process of change itself (line 11538).<sup>214</sup> The means by which Mephistopheles attempts to fulfil this goal, to dig a trench which 'Ordains a border to the waves' (line 11543), is depicted in the section 'Great Outer Precinct of the Palace, Torches'.<sup>215</sup> Here, the extent to which Mephistopheles appears to blend the supernatural with human knowledge is illustrated in the means by which he achieves this goal, which is through the physical labour of 'Lemures',

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<sup>212</sup> See my examination of the treatment of speech ethics in literature within this thesis.

<sup>213</sup> Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. trans. by Edmund Jephcott, ed. by Gunzelin Schmidnerr (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 28.

<sup>214</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 293.

<sup>215</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 293.

the spirits of evil doers. Subsequently, Mephistopheles' role comes to be perceived by Faust as that of an 'overseer' (line 11551) rather than the miracle worker or magician he earlier appears to be. This is a key instance of how Mephistopheles' character morphs within the play to best serve as a foil to Faust's own development towards an embracing of the dual limitations and freedoms characteristic of modernity and eternal striving. As Faust's wishes become more 'epic' in scale (from wooing Gretchen to terraforming, for example), Mephistopheles adapts by actualising these wishes through 'mundane' means (that is, rather than through the fantastical, or by using fantastical agents to perform tasks which could be performed by mundane agents), and Mephistopheles' own restraints equally adapt so as to embody the limitations of time, motivation, limited vision and bureaucracy.<sup>216</sup>

In this way, Mephistopheles enhances the 'epic' nature of the poem as described by Moretti, insofar as the plot requires Mephistopheles to be 'capable of *changing function*',<sup>217</sup> a capacity rooted in the requirement for Mephistopheles to adapt to Faust's changing priorities and to *anticipate* his needs, as seen, for example, in the section (Act IV) entitled 'In the Foothills':

Faust: As many things as you've been through -

Go on and win a battle, too.

Mephistopheles: No - you shall win it! For this show

You are the Generalissimo.

Faust: Yes, that would be the proper rank!

Give orders where my knowledge is a blank. (lines 1309–1312)<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Moretti asserts that it is *Part Two* which is 'the "epic" part', suggesting it took Goethe 'a quarter of a century to realise it' whilst this thesis suggests that these changes may be rooted in broader social changes, including those of industry, politics and education, and compounded by changing modes of administration. Moretti, *Modern Epic: The World System from Goethe to Garcia Marquez*, p. 18.

<sup>217</sup> Moretti, *Modern Epic: The World System from Goethe to Garcia Marquez*, p. 20.

<sup>218</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 262.



Here we see Mephistopheles anticipating Faust's desires (which is, after all, the basis of temptation), and then adapting under Faust's direction to better fulfil his wishes by supplying the knowledge Faust lacks. In effect, Mephistopheles, as a character, represents the infrastructure required by an actual authority figure to achieve his goals in one unified character, and the many servants required to carry out the tasks.

In *Faust*, the relationship between protagonist and antagonist has become wholly interdependent and mutually exploitative. Both Faust and Mephistopheles are defined by each other, but the changes in Mephistopheles are always dictated by Faust's own progress towards the achievement of the state of eternal striving. (This is true even in terms of Mephistopheles' own impoverished view of what adequate recompense would be for his role in Faust's quest: 'I shall be at your service by this bond | Without relief or respite here on earth; | And if or when we meet again beyond, | You are to give me equal worth' (line 1656).<sup>219</sup>) Mephistopheles is, in this respect, more akin to the 'administrator' and symbolic of the a myriad of functionaries and agents of material and social structures (rather than an advocate for theological–philosophical ideals or natural law): 'the rational world is to be conceived as a great, immortal individual who continually brings into being what is needed, and in this way even becomes the master over chance'.<sup>220</sup> Mephistopheles' ultimate failure (in plot terms) lies in his idealistic limitations — he is limited by his belief in a 'natural order', which blinds him to Faust's ability to continually redefine himself and continually challenge preconceptions, even the preconceptions of God.<sup>221</sup> In doing so, Faust achieves a previously unrealised mode of redemption through 'progress' rather than through conformity, and through inspiration rather than through faith. Mephistopheles fulfils the role of administering the wager, yet his goal is to tempt Faust, and he is fundamentally limited in his ability to comprehend the true nature of the wager (blinded by his preoccupation with the semantics and procedures of Faust's wager). This limits Mephistopheles to attempting to bind Faust in the present, rather than attempting to pre-empt Faust's

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<sup>219</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 40.

<sup>220</sup> 'Die vernünftige Welt ist als ein grosses unsterbliches Individuum zu betrachten, das unaufhaltsam das Nothwendige bewirkt und dadurch sich sogar uber' Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe's Letters in the Years 1768 to 1832*, ed. by Heinrich Döring (Berlin: J. Wunder, 1837), p. 416.

<sup>221</sup> *Goethes Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften*, ed. by Rudolf Steiner (Dornach: General Anthroposophical Society of Switzerland, 1883), V, p. 89.

continual progression; opening up the possibility that all systems of knowledge and power — administrations — might be regarded as, in some sense, ultimately limited, or, perhaps, self-defeating. The implicit culmination of this interplay between Faust and Mephistopheles is that the experience of this interplay constitutes, itself, a form of ‘constant striving’, of ‘storm and fury’, and that Mephistopheles unwittingly fulfilled his bargain (by acting as his servant) whilst failing to win the wager (by sating Faust’s desires).<sup>222</sup> Faust’s apparently paradoxical ‘acquittal’ comes from the nature of this desire to remain in the moment whilst continually striving, such that, in the moment of redemption, Faust has achieved a state of continual progression. It is this reinterpretation of what constitutes a state of grace, as it were, that has retrospectively been interpreted by Berman and others as the very epitome of the modernist spirit. On this reading, then, Goethe’s *Faust* presents the reader with an alternative narrative for human development, directly at odds with those presented by classical aesthetics, theology, romanticism, Renaissance humanism or sentimentalism. In *Faust*, the desire to excel is the central redemptive virtue, an aspect portrayed primarily through the character of Faust himself, and the methodologies (‘road maps’) of earlier movements are thrust aside and revealed to be outmoded, an aspect of Faust’s progress which is revealed primarily through the administrator character of Mephistopheles.

‘The Grub and the chrysalis already show the future variegated butterfly’:  
Mephistopheles and Goethe’s vision of an aesthetic future of eternal striving

Goethe’s apparent proffering of eternal striving and destructive creation as impulses more appropriate for the ‘modern’ era appears to not be uncritical, and is, in some instances, portrayed as distinctly problematic. Goethe’s rough plan for *Faust*, drafted in 1800, began with the line ‘Ideal striving to achieve an influence upon and a feeling for the whole of Nature’, and includes the *scored out* phrase ‘Life’s Deeds Essence’. In this schema, Mephistopheles could be read as having a hindering effect on Faust’s ambitions, and seems to reflect Faust’s (and man’s) desire to adhere to the fetters of tradition, even those which fail to adequately address or voice the experiential realities of the zeitgeist. Faust, despite Mephistopheles’ exhortations and

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<sup>222</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 299.

manipulations ('there comes a time, my friend, | When good things savoured at our ease give pleasure', line 1691), chooses progress over contentment. The paradox of Faust finding a project which had the potential to never end (the imposition of his will upon the landscape itself) is in stark contrast to (broadly) classical conceptions of happiness as contentment through the management of expectations and the golden mean. Faust actively seeks a state of constant striving, and identifies this as a self-determined form of happiness (a concept quite possibly unimaginable prior to the emergence of properly modern phenomena such as political or social revolution, industrialisation and the birth of empirical science) rather than as a preordained state of grace. Faust comes to embody an 'excess of meaning' -- how symbolism itself always suggests there is something 'more' -- and, as such, achieves redemption and insertion into the very realm of symbolism he initially rejected as lacking sufficient objectivity:

All in transition

Is but reflection;

What is deficient

Here becomes action;

Human discernment

Here is passed by; (line 12105 - 12109).<sup>223</sup>

In this respect, it is perhaps significant that several passages in Marx and Engels's writings, where they question the basic assumptions behind many of society's organising principles, reference *Faust* directly. For example, Engels, in describing the tenor of the revolutionary spirit that he and Marx intended to invoke, wrote:

I want to try and resolve at least part of Gutzkow's task: the true second part of *Faust* — Faust no longer an egoist but sacrificing himself for mankind — has yet to be written. There is *Faust*, there is the *Wandering Jew*, there is the *Wild Huntsman*, three types of the anticipated spiritual freedom which can easily be placed in connection and relation with Jan Huss. What a poetic

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<sup>223</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 344.

background is given to me there, against which these three demons work their will!<sup>224</sup>

Mephistopheles himself describes Faust, who throughout the play has displayed ‘temperamental’ character traits, of acting over-emotionally and recklessly; yet, despite this behaviour, he is also described as having a fundamental consistency:<sup>225</sup> ‘No Joy could sate him, no delight but cloyed, For changing shapes he lusted to the last’ (line 11585).<sup>226</sup> This statement is followed immediately by Mephistopheles’ own declaration of constancy: ‘Why over? [...] over is as good as never was [...] The Ever-empty is what I prefer’ (line 11595).<sup>227</sup> By having his two central characters possess these two central traits, Goethe succeeds in maintaining a sense of ‘authenticity’ (if not ‘realism’, strictly speaking) in the play, despite its abstract underlying themes of self-determination, metamorphosis, and progress, and gains the ability to have Faust behave in a mercurial manner to move the plot forward, as well as to have Mephistopheles’ powers adapt to the requirements of social commentary.

Another of the means by which Goethe achieves this new, progressive sense of ‘authenticity’ is through his literary technique of providing a contemporary reference after, and a classical reference before, any act of apparent hypocrisy on behalf of the characters, as if to encompass the whole of classical and humanist essentialist tradition as justification. This structural technique occurs throughout the play, as in such instances as ‘Walpurgis Night’ where The Fair One makes a reference to the Bible — ‘You’ve thought such apples very nice | Since Adam’s fall in Paradise’ — immediately followed by the appearance of the Proctophantasmic: a contemporary reference to Friedrich Nicolai described by Faust as being a rationalist who ‘must appraise. Unless he prattles over every phase [...] And we might win his qualified assent; | The more so if we pay him due acknowledgment’ (lines 4140–4150).<sup>228</sup> Aspects of the play such as Mephistopheles’ impersonation of the professor, the

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<sup>224</sup> Frederick Engels, ‘To Wilhelm Graeber in Berlin 13 November 1839’, in *F. Engels, Schriften Der Fruhzeit*, ed. by Gustav Mayer (New York: H. Fertig, 1969).

<sup>225</sup> For more on the sentimentalist representation of ego, see Erich Heller, *The Disinherited Mind* (London: Penguin, 1961), pp. pp. 33-55.

<sup>226</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 294.

<sup>227</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 294.

<sup>228</sup> Friedrich Nicolai (1773–1811) wrote a parody of Goethe’s novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and was a key figure in the rationalist movement.

nature of the soul contract, and Faust's salvation, reveal the extent to which all of the play's characters, other than Faust (and, possibly, God) are limited by conceptions of the world which are no longer relevant. This literary technique has the effect of presenting the decisions and actions of the characters as both *founded upon and diverging from* prior historical conventions. Mephistopheles is, as always, both a prompt and a facilitator for these experiences and settings. If, however, Mephistopheles reflects these references within the narrative and the philosophical thrust of the play, it is Faust's triumph over Mephistopheles which emphasises the idea that progress is the defining and true virtue of humanity. In fact, similar notions to Goethe's as are expressed here came to underlie the actual development of modern systems of administration, which began to justify arbitrary laws and systems without reference to any 'natural order' or Divine inspiration. Such concepts, in which laws and systems were aligned to some preordained order, which had defined, in different ways, the writings of Plato, Augustine and More, and which lead Machiavelli to respond with an exceptional emphasis upon the pragmatic, all begin to foreshadow the 'mighty cosmos of the modern economic order', which Goethe, and, more explicitly, thinkers such as Marx and Nietzsche sought both to adapt to and re-assess.<sup>229</sup>

Mephistopheles drives the plot forward by carrying out Faust's wishes — including what Berman terms as his 'desire for *development*' — whilst simultaneously seeking to damn him.<sup>230</sup> Mephistopheles comes to monopolise Faust's access to the supernatural within *Part One*, and to hijack the practical outcomes of his actions and whims in *Part Two*. At the core of Mephistopheles' character is the paradox that, as a kind of administrator, he thus appears to serve two masters: on the one hand, fulfilling a role within the Divine chain (by acting as The Lord's tempter) and, on the other, by facilitating Faust's own desire for eternal striving or development. (Despite himself, Mephistopheles comes to appear sympathetic to both goals, as where, famously, he paraphrase's Milton's *Paradise Lost*, describing himself as 'that force which would Do ever evil and does ever good' (line 33).)<sup>231</sup> Mephistopheles' power

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<sup>229</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, ed. by Richard Swedberg (London and New York: Norton Critical Edition, 2009), p. 181.

<sup>230</sup> Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 39.

<sup>231</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 33 and 44.

is not boundless, however, and he continually offers explanations and excuses as to why it is impossible for him to perform certain actions on Faust's behalf (as with freeing Margareta in *Part One*: 'I cannot lose the vengeman's bonds, nor undo his bolts').<sup>232</sup> Notably, the limits of Mephistopheles' power are not presented as limited to illusion and deceit, as would be concordant with the limits placed upon the devil's power in Christian mystery plays. Mephistopheles, for example, does not lack the ability to create, which would be an acceptable limit on his powers justified by the argument that the act of creation is God's dominion. Mephistopheles *can* create, as revealed in the scenes with the Homunculus and with the creation of wine in Auerbach's Tavern (nor is he limited in his powers only to perform deceptions, such as illusions or dream manipulation). This variation is not wholly explicable in terms of authorial convenience or plot requirements. In fact, as suggested above, Mephistopheles' power appears to expand and contract in line with Faust's own ambition. Goethe's writings broadly advocate a world view for which 'understanding' is constructed, and based on sensibility and intuition, rather than through the interpretation of an underlying or imposed order. Mephistopheles, along with the figure of the Earth Spirit, represents this 'living quality' in the play wherein the subject and object are 'dissolved together' in a poise of inquiry — a concept entirety compatible with Faust's description of eternal striving. Mephistopheles' abilities, as with Goethe's concept of knowledge, are related, in this way, to humanity through his functional value alone and represent a way of interacting with the natural order. If Goethe's Faust artistically represents the increasing influence of human action upon the world, it is Mephistopheles who is the primary means by which the play incorporates a response to the 'shock of the new' characteristic of an emergent modernity and to the Promethean flavour of industrial change.

*Faust*, if taken as containing some of Goethe's own arguments concerning the authentic relationship between art and history, may be broadly read as a desire for progress and a belief in human potential, but as determined by individual and collective assertions rather than pre-determined. Goethe's apparent ideal of 'art as art', and the play's emphasis upon transformation as existing in tension with progress, permeates every aspect of the text, from the character's dialogue to the

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<sup>232</sup>Goethe, *Faust*, p. 111. As this comes from A Dreary Day this citation lacks a line reference, insofar as this scene is only in a version of *Faust* written in prose.

expectations placed upon the audience to engage in the play's themes. As Faust states:

In vain all treasures of the human mind [...]

I find

There wells within no fresh resource of strength;

Not by a hairs breath am I grown,

No nearer to the limitless unknown. (lines 1810–1815)<sup>233</sup>

Subsequently, the effective 'universe' of the play is one in which no stable underlying objective order exists, and mankind is left free to define its own priorities and destiny. This effect originates from the central relationship between Faust and Mephistopheles, and influences all of the play's subsequent action, with considerable significance for our understanding of the latter as a distinctively modern type of administrator character. Mephistopheles, as the representative of those aspects of the past and present which threaten to stultify the kind of bold self-determinism Goethe appears to advocate in *Faust*, represents those secular forces which appear, at first glance, to be deterministic and pre-ordained, but which may, in actuality, be resisted, bested and exploited, even as they attempt to hinder one's progress.

Berman asserts that *Faust* contains 'the idea of an affinity between the cultural ideal of *self*-development and the real social movement towards *economic* development' and is a 'tragedy of development' as a result;<sup>234</sup> and, indeed, it appears that Goethe consciously sought to not only incorporate, but to actively invoke economic ideas within his characterization.<sup>235</sup> Fittingly, the very *Faustian* role of *Schöpfungskraft* — 'of the power to create' — is also reflected in future German economic

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<sup>233</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 48.

<sup>234</sup> Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 40.

<sup>235</sup> Goethe introduced Johann Gottfried Herder to the court of Archduke Carl August in Weimar. Herder was the writer who first brought the Indian myths of creative destruction into Germany in his *Philosophy of Human History* ('higher life must *come to be* from inferior life through sacrifice and destruction'). Similar themes permeate *Faust* and others of Goethe's writings. The poem *Divan, Buch Suleika* inverts the Renaissance idea that Man is created in the image of God, and *Divan, Buch Suleika* suggests that the pleasurable duty of invention is integral to Man's nature. See Johann Gottfried Herder, *Herder: Philosophical Writings*, trans. by Michael N. Forster, ed. by Michael N. Forster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 193.

philosophies, even serving as a frequent metaphor in economic treatises, where the *productive powers* were seen as being the key to national wealth, emphasising what Werner Sombart described, in the first half of the twentieth century, as ‘the becoming, which forever is active and lives’.<sup>236</sup> Sombart describes the culmination of this becoming as ‘Wholeness’ (*Ganzheit*), and his expositions of this state are interwoven with references to both Goethe and Nietzsche. Sombart thus quotes *Faust* to illustrate his own theories of mankind as having an underlying drive to emulate ‘creation in the image of God’ (*Gottähnlichkeit*), with which he thus sought to convey the sense of awe felt by mankind at the extent of its own achievements.<sup>237</sup> The parallel between these economic ideas and the role that eternal striving plays in *Faust* confirms the ways in which Mephistopheles, as a supernatural force which has adopted human qualities, captures the blurred line between individual human actions and collective actions such as those undertaken by corporations, institutions and organisations.

Written in 1930, Sombart’s book, *Die Drei Nationalökonomien*, implies that the heredity influence of the Renaissance upon German economics was, in part, actually transformed by the concepts of Goethe’s *Faust*. This is indicated in Sombart’s own words:

I acknowledge, what in the innermost  
Keeps the world together,  
Behold all will to power and seeds  
And do no longer poke around in words.<sup>238</sup>

Berman and Lukacs have both suggested that Goethe’s *Faust* is, for this reason, the literary archetype of dramatisations of that distinctively modern dilemma posed by the need to sacrifice something of the past in order to progress — to be creatively

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<sup>236</sup> ‘Das Werdende, das ewig wirkt und lebt’, in W. Sombart, *Die Drei Nationalökonomien* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1930), p. 299.

<sup>237</sup> For examples, see W. Sombart, *Socialism and the Social Movement*, trans. by Anson P. Atterbury (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr and Company, 1902), p. 24 and 142.

<sup>238</sup> Sombart, *Die Drei Nationalökonomien*, p. 106. Also see Jurgen G. Backhaus, *Evolutionary Economic Thought: European Contributions and Concepts* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2003).



destructive (in Schumpeter's famous description of capitalist modernity) — and Mephistopheles is, at every point in the play, the means or the catalyst through which this is achieved. In *Part One*, Mephistopheles incorporates the worst aspects of past ideals and systems of knowledge. This theme continues in *Part Two* and Mephistopheles displays traits which appear to be allegories for the tools of industrialisation, urbanisation, early capitalism and the rise of the nation state, all of which are directly referenced in *Faust*, and which serve, in turn, as an analogy for mankind's changing relationship with nature.

Berman reads *Faust* as representing 'modern environments and experiences [that] cut across all boundaries', as a result of which 'modernity can be said to unite all mankind', at least in regard to the later sections of the play.<sup>239</sup> The earlier sections, however, are more clearly concerned with a retrospective appraisal of the dual influences that idealised views of the Renaissance (such as in sentimentalism) and the continued influence of the Church had upon contemporary social issues such as education and personal liberties. It is Mephistopheles who provides Faust with the means to express his desire to eternally strive, thereby facilitating a transition from the preoccupation with the validity of knowledge and love, addressed in the early sections of the play, to the desire for industrial development and global change expressed in the later sections. Goethe's Mephistopheles is the character who seals the pact and provides the power which 'allows' Faust's tragic and redemptive journey of destructive creation, and thus Mephistopheles facilitates the source of his own undoing, outdone by Faust's striving. This aspect of the play may, possibly, be at the root of Marx's interest in *Faust* also, and his reading of Mephistopheles as part of a greater impression that historical 'tools' of power have come in capitalist modernity to hamper mankind's development.

As we have seen, Berman suggests that *Faust* expresses 'the idea of an affinity between the cultural ideal of *self*-development and the real social movement towards *economic* development', but analysis of Mephistopheles as an administrator character suggests, however, that he functions on more levels than as a depiction of unfettered capitalist exploitation.<sup>240</sup> Berman's argument is strong, supported by

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<sup>239</sup> Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 15.

<sup>240</sup> Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 40.

direct textual citations and the biographical evidence of Goethe's interest in the proto-socialist and industrial advocates *Le Globe*.<sup>241</sup> However, Berman later suggests that Mephistopheles represents 'the private freebooter and predator', by citing how Mephistopheles 'executes much of the dirty work'.<sup>242</sup> Given the strength of Berman's prior reading (*Faust* as the presentation of *self* and *economic* development) it is more fitting to read Mephistopheles in this schema as representative of the technology, discourses and infrastructure (both past and present) which enable development to occur. Berman argues that there is a shift in Faust's dialogue in the later sections of the play, suggesting that 'Faust has begun to use post-1789 political language', citing examples of the use of terms such as 'free spirit' and 'all rights'.<sup>243</sup> Here, if one accepts Berman's observations, it again follows that we may expect Mephistopheles to display complementary shifts in his language use. However, these are not evident. Instead, Mephistopheles' language continually reflects the manner *expected* by Faust in keeping with his ordered duties, an effect which becomes increasingly evident in *Part Two*.

Goethe's portrayal of Mephistopheles, rather than conforming to free market impulses or the desire for acquisition, conforms to motivations which are derived from his role as facilitating a fundamental issue at the heart of the text's power structure, which reflects post-Enlightenment art's growing interest in the effects of industrialisation. Mephistopheles is the primary representative of any promise of a 'higher reality' in *Faust*, and it is Mephistopheles through which the audience (or reader) gets to observe Faust's distance from the practical outcomes of his desires, 'driven far afield [distanced] by some strange leaven [Mephistopheles]' (line 302). Mephistopheles is both ordered ('lead him [Faust] down your path by shrewd resource' line 326) to test Faust and permitted to do so in his own way ('Provided that your Honour gives | Me leave to lead him gently up my alley!' line 314).<sup>244</sup> As such, Mephistopheles is both an agent and instigator, simultaneously an accomplice and prime mover, as it were. Mephistopheles' internal motivations are, in effect, those of his external obligations, and he is therefore less a 'character' so much as he

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<sup>241</sup> *Le Globe* was a newspaper published in France from 1824 to 1832, advocating financial, social and industrial innovation. For more see Goethe, *Conversations with Eckermann: Being Appreciations and Criticisms*.

<sup>242</sup> Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 40.

<sup>243</sup> Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, p. 40.

<sup>244</sup> Goethe, *Faust*, p. 10.

is a personification. As Mephistopheles is clearly not conflicted in any sense, he lacks any form of character development, and may be seen, in this way, as the quintessential representation of an individual who is a product of discourses of power — an ultimately only relevant for the higher power represented. In this way, he is the very distilment of what it *is* to be an agent or employee, whose very power rests upon his lack of autonomy. For all of Mephistopheles' clever word play and wily conniving, 'it is not the intelligent person who rules, but intelligence; not the rational person, but reason', as Goethe, in another context, puts it.<sup>245</sup>

As consistently demonstrated throughout this chapter, Mephistopheles may then be seen as a character whose implications for the text ultimately transcend the 'character' of Mephistopheles himself, and this effect itself suggests a dramatic shift in how Goethe perceived Mephistopheles' ability to influence his surroundings, from the classical and Renaissance Humanist methods of the play's early scenes, to the later methods of industrialisation, labour-power and force. Mephistopheles, as with the other administrator characters studied within this thesis, is a presence whose impact upon the plot is not dependent upon its individual character, or the character's goals, provided they are able to carry out the function of actualising the central protagonist's goals. This is clearly evident in the later sections of *Faust*, when Mephistopheles acquires the aid of 'The Mighty Men' (who are themselves unnamed). This scene, in which Mephistopheles and these men murder the 'aged couple' in the watch tower (line 11240), represents the threat to Faust that he is now irredeemable, damned by his own short sightedness and his inability to second guess Mephistopheles (and therefore potentially Mephistopheles' moment of triumph). However, this terrible deed is described as a collective act by all four, undertaken and reported in unison as 'Mephistopheles and the three' (11350). Their actions are undifferentiated and unattributed ('we knocked in vain' line 11352; 'we met no response' line 11357; 'we fell to without ado' line 11360), acting as one, and 'exeunt-ing' together. Even in what is, in effect, the moment in which Mephistopheles is portrayed as at his most callous, inhuman and deadly, he is effectively merged into one of a variety of (literally) nameless servants. The marked changes between the Faust and the Mephistopheles at the end of the second part and

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<sup>245</sup> *Goethes Naturwissenschaftliche Schriften* [Goethe's natural scientific writings], Volume 5: *Sprüche in Prosa* [Sayings in prose].

the beginning of part one may be read as a break from the romantic tradition of characters and their circumstances as the conflict of ideals against the mundane. Frederick Beiser's reading of Hegel's thought advocates that Hegel held that ideas and history develop symbiotically and that the events in the world including economic and social circumstances are determined by concepts and ideas. Both Faust and Mephistopheles have changed by the end of the drama in both action and apprehension.<sup>246</sup> Faust no longer seeks power or validation from more powerful forces or out of comparison between himself and his ideals, and instead acts without deference to any authority including the authority of his own prior concepts of individual actualisation. Mephistopheles now effects the world by multiplying his own individual influence in the form of amorphous thugs to the point of his practically becoming a collective. Both Faust and Mephistopheles, then, may be read as changing *as the world they inhabit changes*, exemplifying Beiser's reading of a Hegelian relationship between the world and concepts.

To summarise, in *Faust* Mephistopheles' character incorporates systems of knowledge and power both past and present. The manner in which this power is manifested changes throughout the play to greater enhance what may be read as Goethe's broader thematic assertion of the need to move away from past conceptions of virtue and accomplishment, and to craft new concepts fit for a coming era founded upon the collective mass achievements of industrialisation and technology. Faust's eventual triumph over Mephistopheles, without whom he could have achieved nothing, represents a further layer within the play's thematic concerns: that in order to continually achieve and strive, mankind must learn to interact with the very systems and methods it creates to achieve its ends; that mankind must learn to temper this relationship with an awareness that those self-same systems may ultimately limit mankind's potential; and that they may eventually need to be banished.

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<sup>246</sup> See *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, ed. by Frederick C. Beiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 278. Interestingly, Taylor suggests a reading of Hegel which places a slightly different emphasis upon the relationship between ideas, individuals and history, which might be read as being reflected in Dostoevsky's later work, as we shall see.



### **Auto-da-fé: Reading the Grand Inquisitor as an Administrator Character**

This chapter aims to show how chapter V, book V of *The Brothers Karamazov*, entitled 'The Grand Inquisitor', may be read as a work in which Dostoevsky invokes the administrator character to interrogate ideas concerning the development of modern social institutions, particularly, in this case, as articulated through the Tsarist bureaucracy, Russian socialist thought, and the ideas of the Enlightenment championed by Catherine the Great. While it is not possible to wholly differentiate these critiques - given how the story acts as a single allegory for a whole range of ideological, individual and institutional derangements, and given that the chapter is intended to function within the context of a wider novel - it is possible to describe, in the broadest terms, those aspects that appear most pointedly addressed to contemporary perspectives.

From the 1860s, Dostoevsky's writing reflects the views of the *Pochennichestvo* movement, which rejected Europe's culture and contemporary philosophical movements, such as nihilism and materialism, idealized Russia's history, and promoted inter-personal change (humbling of the self and faith) as the means to achieve social change and a belief that the Russian Orthodox Church represented a means to achieve social reform. Above all, 'The Grand Inquisitor', I argue, explores the question of how an institution, which has been founded upon a particular set of ideas and principles (using the template of the Russian Church), may ultimately turn against its philosophical, ethical or theological foundations and abandon them in favour of maintaining the institution itself. Subsequently, the 'poem' (as Ivan describes it) appears to serve as a parable for a wider phenomenon: the tendency for the very processes and structures which were initially created as a means by which to disseminate and actualise a core set of ideas and values to come to be seen as an end in themselves. Dostoevsky's characterisation of the Inquisitor as administrator highlights the influence of ideology upon the realm of the intimate, and thereby suggests a critique of many of the proposed methods for organising communities and individual interactions which were being advocated from a range of different political perspectives during this period.

In 'The Grand Inquisitor', Dostoevsky uses the form of the 'fable' to incorporate a specific representation of the growing power of supraindividual institutions (such as the Orthodox and Catholic Churches), as well as wider debates around how best to order modern society. By presenting them in the way that he does, I will argue, Dostoevsky reflects (and reflects upon) a number of contemporary debates. In particular, Dostoevsky appears to have intended 'The Grand Inquisitor' to be read within the context of discussions surrounding the possibility of reforming the Tsarist bureaucracy, as well as various Socialist doctrines vying for influence within the oppositional Russian politics of his time. Yet there are also strong indications of a broader intention to counter, or at least interrogate, those ideals, earlier championed in Russia by Catherine the Great, which originated in the Scottish Enlightenment (as exemplified in the writings of Smith and Hume) in order to equate ideology with institution in the same manner as, at an earlier moment, Machiavelli equated power with power's perception: through character rather than through either mythic language or treatise.<sup>247</sup> Just as the nineteenth-century Swiss jurist and political theorist Bluntschli, for example, viewed administration as 'the activity of the state in individual and small things', so Dostoevsky's 'The Grand Inquisitor' suggests an attempt to analyse – in line with the author's customary identification with a late nineteenth-century psychological realism in the novel - institutional failures by tracing their roots in individual psychology.

As an administrator character, the Inquisitor is able to serve, in literary terms, as a representative of institutional power within the text with whom other characters may debate certain understandings of ideologies and institutions through interaction rather than merely through polemic or exposition. Bakhtin described this as 'the dialogical' form of Dostoevsky's writing, and 'the way he artistically visualised the life of human consciousness, a visualisation embodied in the form of content'; 'To be

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<sup>247</sup> John W. Cairns, 'John Millar, Ivan Andreyevich Tret'yakov, and Semyon Efimovich Desnitsky: A Legal Education In Scotland, 1761-1767' in *Russia and Scotland in the Enlightenment*, ed. by Peter Jones Tatina Artemieva, Michael Mikeschin (St Petersburg: St Petersburg Centre for the History of Ideas, 2001), 20-37. For more see A. H. Brown, 'Adam Smith's First Russian Followers', in *Essays on Adam Smith*, ed. by A. S. Skinner and Thomas Wilson (New York and London: University of Oxford Press, 1975), pp. 247-73. and A. G. Cross, *By the Banks of the Thames: Russians in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Massachusetts: Newtonville, 1980), pp. 122-28.

means to be for another, and through the other, for oneself'.<sup>248</sup> The 'extraordinary and unique place' occupied by Dostoyevsky in the history of the novel is, then, for Bakhtin, in the manner in which what his 'characters *say* constitutes an arena of never-ending struggle with others' words, in all realms of life and creative ideological activity. For this reason these utterances may serve as excellent models of the most varied forms for transmitting and framing another's discourse'.<sup>249</sup> In this way, Dostoevsky's presentation of the Inquisitor is a continuation of the tendency, already seen in a text like Goethe's *Faust*, to use characterisation as one means by which to incorporate external concepts of power *into* the narrative by depicting the impact such wider concepts have upon the personality, interactions and philosophy of a given individual. While *Faust*, for example, incorporates the imagery and narrative tropes of Judeo-Christianity, Goethe employs them as a mythological backdrop to explore the ramifications of the central character's frustration with and subsequent rejection of reason, convention and faith, and instead embraced a new kind of aesthetic with incorporated self-actualisation and the quest for meaning. Dostoevsky employs the institutions of the Church and state as a backdrop for characters who have found reason, convention and faith wanting, and then explores the internal and external dynamics which occur when these characters and institutions conflict. Thus, what Goethe does in the abstract, Dostoevsky depicts with a sense of psychological realism, in which the characters' thoughts reactions and motivations are coherent and cogent, despite their extreme circumstances.

The Russians customarily give 988 as the founding date for the Orthodox Church, and, through the history of the transformation of the Rus into the state of Russia, church and state progressed in symbiosis. From the sixteenth century, the government of the Russian tsar coincided with the rise of the metropolitan archbishops of Moscow, who themselves were largely aristocratic and, as private land owners, personally invested in the affairs of state. As such, the Orthodox Church represents, in mainstream Russian historiography, the underpinnings - the 'authentic self' - of the Russian state itself. Dostoevsky himself appears to closely

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<sup>248</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. trans. by Caryl Emerson (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), VIII, p. 287.

<sup>249</sup> Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*. trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 349.



correlate the Russian land with his faith, describing that his exile to Siberia, conversely, was a time of profound religious significance to him as his initial depression gave way to what he described as a 'wave of *renewal*' and which provided a 'rapturous apprehension of life'.<sup>250</sup> It seems that Siberia offered a sense of purity to Dostoevsky, which appears to be closely tied in his mind to the fact of Serbia's distance from Europe and European ideals. By having a Catholic Inquisitor defend the institution of the Church in 'The Grand Inquisitor', Dostoevsky could then be seen to be presenting his own 'dark reflection' of the Orthodox Church, and, by implication, the authentic Russian self. At the same time, analysis of the Inquisitor as an administrator character may also place this specific reading within a broader context as suggesting an examination of how ideologies come, more generally, to be perpetuated in the modern world.

This chapter seeks to demonstrate how, in particular, Dostoevsky innovatively uses an administrator character to portray a state of fundamental *inauthenticity* as the product of interactions between individuals and institutions. (Hence, in part, the story's later attraction for existentialist thinkers.) In this way, Dostoevsky's depiction of the Inquisitor subverts the tradition of rhetorical dialectic and dramatic monologue, in a fashion that may productively be related to the tradition, stretching from Machiavelli and More, through Shakespeare to Goethe, which this thesis has discussed. That is, rhetoric was used by Machiavelli and More to 'shore up' and 'prove' their political and moral arguments; was incorporated puckishly by Shakespeare into his characters' monologues and dialogues to reveal their motivations and self-justifications; and in Goethe, is used (in almost complete antithesis to how Aristotle intended, as a tool to present truth in the best possible light) to justify moral relativity and add seductive appeal to subversive behaviour. In Dostoevsky, rhetoric is employed by characters to prove points, explain their motivations, when required to advocate for any unconventional or subversive positions held, and to invoke the wider ideas or founding principles of a collective entity or institution and then cast them in a light which favours their own personal agenda.

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<sup>250</sup> Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850-1859* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), II, pp. 6-68.

'The Grand Inquisitor' fable, as told by the character of Ivan Karamazov, describes what appears to be the second coming of Christ, in the manner, as Ivan puts it, of 'the great fashion among poets to make the denizens and powers of higher worlds descend on earth and mix freely with mortals'.<sup>251</sup> The fact that Christ's implied return occurs during the sixteenth-century Spanish Inquisition suggests, however, that this setting is intended to act, above all, as a direct example of an ideology realised through coercion, and hence as existentially 'inauthentic' in form. The Man - who it is interpreted by both the Inquisitor 'within' the 'poem', and by its 'audience' Alyosha, as Christ - in stark contrast to his interrogator, remains silent through the narrative, and his identity as Christ is conveyed, within the story, via his 'light, enlightenment, and power',<sup>252</sup> as is evident in the reaction of those who interact personally with Him. In this way, Christ's role within 'The Grand Inquisitor' may be read as embodying a means to realise world-transforming change which stands in direct opposition to the institutionally-driven cohesion of the Inquisition, instead achieving change via willing submission, effected through recruitment and fellow feeling.

Dostoevsky appears, then, to be writing against what he may have perceived to have been the growing adoption of European Enlightenment ideals, and the entailed belief that correctly founded institutions, laws and constitutions would lead to a harmonious society:

...there is nothing you can do about it; rather it must *happen of itself*; it must *be present in one's nature*; it must be an unconscious ingredient of the nature of the race. In a word, if there is to be a foundation for brotherhood and love, there must be love.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*. trans. by Constance Garnett, ed. by Ralph E. Matlaw (London and New York: Norton Critical Edition, 1946), p. 227. All quotes taken from this edition unless otherwise noted. Matlaw is aware of the criticisms the Garnett translation of 1912 has received, and the version used has extensive revisions with particular emphasis on attempting to duplicate exactly Dostoevsky's deliberate use of words and phrases. My thanks to Assistant Professor Slobodanka Vladiv-Glover for her help with contextualising the translation of specific words and phrases used by Dostoevsky.

<sup>252</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 229.

<sup>253</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*. trans. by Kyril FitzLyon (London: Alma Classics, 2008), p. 50.

The Chapter, Dostoevsky suggested to his editor N.A. Lyubimov, would '*compel them to recognize* that a pure, ideal Christian is not something abstract but is graphically real ... Christianity is the sole refuge for the Russian land from all its woes'.<sup>254</sup> In Dostoyevsky's parable the Inquisitor appears to advocate for Christianity in the abstract, as it were, and the reader is encouraged to reject his arguments. The Inquisitor commands that 'the Man' (Christ) be arrested, and, once he is imprisoned, delivers a monologue to the silent Christ figure expounding his justifications for the Church. The Inquisitor explains that freedom of conscience is a terrifying burden which man relinquishes through worship. Worship's primary goal, for the Inquisitor, is to alleviate this fear through the sublimation of the individual will to the institution of the Church rather than through direct communion with God.

Most of all, though, the parable appears to encourage the belief that The Church has achieved power precisely through means other than Christ's own teaching. Indeed, the Inquisitor argues that the Church has effectively excelled Christ, and so surpassed the need for Him. The Church, for the Inquisitor, excels in spectacle, provides a doctrinal focus for sublimation, and offers material security in exchange for alliance. The Inquisitor's fundamental argument is thus that the institution of the (Catholic) Church is more important than any interpersonal relationship for the faithful with Christ. By implication, this becomes a justification for the Inquisition, and for his own role as Inquisitor. Just as Christ represents an intermediary between man and God, the Inquisitor situates himself as an intermediary between man and the Church. His monologue is therefore a personal assertion of his own role *as* an administrator character, and an attempt on the part of the Inquisitor to assert that this is now of greater importance to the Church than Christ himself.

#### The More Mechanical it is the Better - Tsarist Bureaucracy

*The Brothers Karamazov* was started in 1879. On June 11th of that year Dostoevsky wrote a letter Lyubimov, already quoted, in which he described the Inquisitor as a 'contemporary *nay-sayer*, one of the most vehement, [who] openly declares himself

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<sup>254</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 760. Dostoevsky was raised very religious, and read a Russian translation of Johannes Hübner's *One Hundred and Four Sacred Stories from the Old and New Testaments Selected for Children* (a child's bible) from an early age. Dostoevsky appears to have remained devout into (and beyond) his time in military academy, being nick named "Monk Photius", after St. Photios the Great (both a religious and a literary figure) by his piers. Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850-1859*, pp. 401, 69-11.

in favour of the devil's council and maintains that it insures mankind's happiness more than Christ'. The Chapter, Dostoevsky continues, 'is an *omen*, and a striking one for Russian, stupid socialism... the future reign of socialism ... and the total enslavement of the freedom of conscience - that is what the desperate nay-sayer and atheist comes to'.<sup>255</sup>

Dostoevsky's comments have to be seen in the context of opposition to the so-called 'table of ranks' (Табель о рангах) that was in use in Russia between 1722 and 1917, and which served to codify a national social hierarchy legitimised by the state. The Code of the Law of the Russian Empire of 1832, vol. IX, 'Laws about Estates', categorised the population into four 'estates': the nobility, clergy, and the rural and urban inhabitants. A further subsection included those who fell within the 'table of ranks', the military, civil servants and the court. The highest ranks automatically bestowed a level of nobility. Subsequently, the nobility constituted both an 'estate', and the upper hierarchy of the civil service, and the civil service was effectively synonymous with the nobility as a result.<sup>256</sup> Frank, however, suggests that Dostoevsky's ideals stood in stark contrast to the pervading direction of social reconstruction of Russia towards the empowerment of a modified landed gentry. Frank contends that Dostoevsky's incarceration and time in the military suggests Dostoevsky "experienced 'a *leap of faith*' in the moral beauty of the Russian peasantry, ... Parricide".<sup>257</sup>

Outside of the state establishment, however, there began to emerge in the mid nineteenth century various groups of Russian radicals, collectively known as Populists (Narodniki), who, influenced by the writings of Alexander Herzen, Nikolay Chernyshevsky, and others, advocated new modes of social organisation. By the time Dostoevsky wrote *The Brothers Karamazov*, and prior to the later nineteenth-century influence of Marx, 'Utopian socialism', which advocated the construction of an industrial democracy, was probably most favoured by the dominant Populist groups as a model. Advocates for reform thus concerned

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<sup>255</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 759.

<sup>256</sup> Further, entrance into each grade demanded a certain level of education. The tsarist government controlled all educational institutions and thereby determined the number and gender of specialists to be trained, all of which was allocated by local high ranking officials. For more see: Richard Pipes, *Russia under the Old Regime* (London: Penguin, 1993).

<sup>257</sup> Frank, *Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850-1859*, p. 379—91.

themselves with postulating how best to arrange a society in which individual freedoms were protected by voluntary associations and community organizations, and which most effectively regulated worker participation in managing industry and government.

Dostoyevsky appears to have equated the church-centred theocratic Christianity of Catholicism with socialist ideas being adopted by the middle and upper classes.

Dostoevsky's diary entry for January 1877 reads:

[France] developed from the ideas of 1789 her own particular French socialism - i.e., the pacification and organization of human society without Christ and outside of Christ, as Catholicism tried but was unable to organize it in Christ; this same France - in her revolutionary Convention, in her atheists, in her socialists, and in her communards of today - is and continues to be in the highest degree a Catholic nation...<sup>258</sup>

A similar interpretation is voiced by Ivan as exposition for 'The Grand Inquisitor':

'One may say it is the most fundamental feature of Roman Catholicism, in my opinion at least. "All has been given by Thee to the Pope," they say, "and all, therefore, is still in the Pope's hands, and there is no need for Thee to come now at all".'<sup>259</sup>

It seems clear that Dostoevsky is channelling his own opinions through the voices of some of his characters, particularly in regard to Socialism. Prince Myshkin delivers a long speech towards the end of Part 4, Chapter 7 of *The Idiot* which describes Socialism as the secular continuation of a project of social control instigated by the Catholic church:

'Socialism is the progeny of Romanism and of the Romanistic spirit. It and its brother Atheism proceed from Despair in opposition to Catholicism. It seeks to replace in itself the moral power of religion, in order to appease the spiritual thirst of parched humanity and save it; not

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<sup>258</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary Volume 2:1877-1881*. trans. by Kenneth Lantz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. 813.

<sup>259</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 231.

by Christ, but by force. "Don't dare to believe in God, don't dare to possess any individuality, any property!"

There are direct correlations that may be drawn between Myshkin's view of secular Catholicism and Alyosha's impassioned response to Ivan's poem:

'That's not the idea of it in the Orthodox Church.... That's Rome, and not even the whole of Rome, it's false-those are the worst of the Catholics the Inquisitors, the Jesuits... They are simply the Romish army for the earthly sovereignty of the world in the future, with the Pontiff of Rome for Emperor... It's simple lust for power, for filthy earthly gain, for domination - something like a universal serfdom with them as masters - that's all they stand for.'<sup>260</sup>

Socialism, or at least the interpretation articulated within some Enlightenment models of institutional influence, is presented by Dostoevsky here as simply a secularised version of Catholicism's attempt to *impose* a collective unity, and thereby merely an alternative means of imposing serfdom.

Significantly, Dostoevsky, in the author's introduction to *The Brothers Kazamarov*, asserted that the central message of *The Brothers Kazamarov* was contained, in microcosmic form, within 'The Grand Inquisitor' story. Dostoevsky wrote that his original intention was for the novel (finished in 1880) to have a second volume, a sequel which, due to his death in 1881, Dostoevsky never completed. (Of course, Dostoevsky added: 'Indeed, I am actually glad that my novel has of itself split into two narratives'.<sup>261</sup>) More pertinently to our purposes, Dostoevsky reveals that the 'first novel' (*The Brothers Karamazov* as we know it) 'takes place thirteen years ago', placing the events of the novel approximately around the year 1866. This allows the reader to draw some interesting historical analogies. Given that 'The Grand Inquisitor' was viewed by Dostoevsky as containing the summation of the novel as a whole, a focus on this section of the novel may clarify those elements of the wider novel overtly intended as a commentary upon Russia circa 1866.

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<sup>260</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 241.

<sup>261</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. xviii.

Reading 'The Grand Inquisitor' as a more or less autonomous encapsulation of the novel's themes does not, however, discount reading 'The Grand Inquisitor' with regard to its relationship with the wider novel. Indeed, the interesting analogies between Russian history around 1866 and the events leading up to 1879, when viewed with direct reference to the novel, further encourage a reading of 'The Grand Inquisitor' as a 'an *omen*' warning against the inherent tendency for organisational structures to become self-serving and to abandon their founding principles, and indicates the possibility of critical speculation regarding those specific political and economic ideas which informed Dostoevsky's depictions of Tsarist democracy, 'stupid socialism', and the Russian intelligentsia's enthusiasm for 'Western' rationalist thought.

Alexander II, 'the Tsar Liberator' (often referred to as 'Russia's White Hope'), reigned between 1855 to 1881, and has generally been perceived as overseeing a regime that started with great promise, but lost momentum and ended in assassination and unfulfilled hopes.<sup>262</sup> Despite multiple reforms, Alexander never instigated the changes to the underlying social structures which might have led to significant changes in Russia's economic fortunes. Most strikingly, perhaps, Dostoevsky may well have intended to allude to the failed assassination attempt upon Alexander on April 4th 1866, given his precision about the novel's setting as being 'thirteen years ago' from the June of 1879. The would-be assassin was one Dimitry Karakozow who was a member of the revolutionary socialist 'Ishutin Society'. Further, Karakozow was believed to have been himself inspired by the character of Rakhmetov in Nikolai Chernyshevsky's 1863 novel *What is to Be Done?*, a work which detailed the struggles of two ascetics who appear to hold socialist sympathies.<sup>263</sup> The obvious similarity of 'Karakozov' with 'Karamazov' is surely no coincidence, particularly considering that a major portion of the plot of *The Brothers Karamazov* revolves around the murder of Fyodor Karamazov by a deluded assassin. In Book Eleven (*Brother Ivan Fyodorovich*) the character Smerdyakov confesses to Ivan Karamazov, insisting that he, Ivan, had given implicit approval for the act. Ivan, in a later retelling of the conversation, appears to accept a portion of the blame, stating:

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<sup>262</sup> J. A. S. Grenville, *Europe Reshaped 1848 - 78* (Oxford: Fontana, 1976), p. 232.

<sup>263</sup> W. E. Moss, *Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1992), p. 134.

‘If it is not Dmitri, but Smerdyakov who's the murderer, I share his guilt, for I put him up to it. Whether I did, I don't know yet. But if he is the murderer, and not Dmitiri, then, of course, I am the murderer, too.’<sup>264</sup>

It is notable, regarding Dostoevsky's description of 'The Grand Inquisitor', that in his 1879 letter to Lyubimov, as encapsulating 'the main theme' of *The Brothers Karamazov* (the 'whole novel is written for its sake') is that Alexander celebrated his survival by building multiple churches and places of worship in Russian cities.<sup>265</sup> Similarly relevant is the continued influence and power that the Russian Church enjoyed, more generally, under Alexander (despite his reform agenda), the expansion of which in 1866 was only a part. Under Alexander, primary education, for example, was left in sole purview of the Church,<sup>266</sup> and despite Alexander's instigation of 'emancipation' (which allowed the serfs' communal ownership of land upon 'redemption' payments) the Church retained possession of large amounts of land without tax. At the same time, in the light of poor agricultural yields, the Russian nobility began to sell poorly-worked and depleted land to communes, choosing to take jobs in a vastly expanding state bureaucracy (the expansion of which was primarily funded by redemption payments) and in the Church (again, exempt from such payments).<sup>267</sup> Thus the state bureaucracy, the land owners, and the Church may well have been regarded as synonymous in the minds of the Russian middle class. The image of a Church Official (the Inquisitor), it could then be argued, would have presented the natural choice for a character intended to embody a self-serving bureaucracy at this point in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Many aspects of *The Brothers Karamazov* may similarly be seen as offering a commentary upon the growth of Russian bureaucracy and state institutions, particularly those of the Orthodox Church and the Legal System. In 1864 - two years before the events in the novel are set - local assemblies (*Zemstvos*) were, for example, established as part of Alexander II's ongoing attempts at social reform. It is these attempts to abolish serfdom from above which Frank suggests account for Dostoevsky's (possibly biased) support for Alexander II, as 'Dostoevsky had become

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<sup>264</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 585.

<sup>265</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 760.

<sup>266</sup> Moss, *Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia*, pp. 95 - 98.

<sup>267</sup> Moss, *Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia*, pp. 161 - 62.



a revolutionary *only* to abolish serfdom and *only* after the seeming dissolution of all hope that it would be ended'.<sup>268</sup> These assemblies effectively acted as franchises, with centralised funding provided to recruited officials in exchange for the provision of provincial and county government services. Such assemblies orchestrated the delivery of a new, 'liberal' legal system (liberal in the sense that it had a jury system rather than in terms of the actual legislation that it passed).<sup>269</sup> Dostoevsky opposed the new system, not because he approved of its predecessor, but because he appeared to wish for a legal system that would focus upon moral accountability rather than the details of the crime itself, and which focused on reprobation - undoing the harms caused and alleviating suffering - rather than punishment. Dostoevsky was critical of the existing Russian system of trials, describing how 'my way [trial by jury] could not be implemented and that [the opinion is] that "*the more mechanical it is, the better*".'<sup>270</sup> In attempting to ensure liberal principles were maintained, the new judicial administration became increasingly systematised from 1864, and Dostoevsky overtly criticised these courts as out of touch with the realities of those they passed judgment upon. This perception may have been furthered by the introduction of a jury system, judges appointed for life, and justices of the peace who handled minor local offenses. These reforms, however, excluded the existing peasant *volst* courts, discarding many years of established case law, and which could therefore be perceived as the imposition of a legal system. The emphasis upon abstract principles, pre-described offences, and mandated sentences were critically highlighted by Dostoevsky in his description of the trial of one Mrs. Dzhunkovsky. Mrs Dzhunkosky was tried, and acquitted, for child abuse and neglect in a manner mocking the Apnoeic alienated justification:

As I said earlier, the defendants were acquitted. And why not? What's remarkable is not that they were acquitted but that they were charged and brought to trial. Who – what court – could have found them guilty, and of what? Oh, of course there is a court that could find the guilty and

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<sup>268</sup> Joseph Frank, *Dostoevsky: A Writer in His Time* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), p. 236.

<sup>269</sup> For more see: Alexander K Afanas'ev, 'Jurors and Jury Trials in Imperial Russia', in *Russia's Great Reforms, 1855-1881*, ed. by Ben Eklof, John Bushnell, and Larissa Zakharova (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), pp. 214-30.

<sup>270</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *A Writer's Diary 1877 – 1881* (Moscow: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p.1168; parenthesis mine, emphasis in the original.

show clearly of what, but it is not a criminal court with horrors who judge by written law.<sup>271</sup>

Kuchеров argued that this distrust of ‘mechanical’ institutions, which dictated quantitative decisions according to abstract legal criteria, anticipates a pervasive approach of seeing institutions as distinct from the citizenry.<sup>272</sup> In effect, in an attempt lay a formal moral foundation for the legal system, the law became removed from the individual circumstances faced by the courts.

Book Twelve of *The Brothers Karamazov*, ‘Judicial Error’, details the wrongful trial and conviction of Dmitri Karamazov for the murder of Fyodor Karamazov, father of Ivan, Dmitri and Alyosha. This event, too, correlates to historical occurrences in Russia in the 1860s-70s. In 1864 Alexander II attempted a reform of the judiciary, abolishing the pre-existing system of class-based courts. Alexander's reforms were, however, only partially successful.<sup>273</sup> Although juries were introduced, and the police were somewhat reformed, the administrative authority still monopolised the *volost* courts run by, and on behalf of, the nobility. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, significantly, Dmitri Karamazov is tried by a jury. Yet Dostoevsky presents the jury process in an entirely negative light, and presents the jury itself as hopelessly fragmented, contradictory and incoherent:

‘A solid speech’, a gentleman in one group observed ...

‘he brought in too much psychology’ said another ...

‘But it was all true, the absolute truth!’ ...

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<sup>271</sup> Fyodor Dostoyevsky, *A Writer's Diary 1877 – 1881*, p.1048. For more on Dostoevsky and the representation of the jury see: Gary Rosenshield, *Western law, Russian justice: Dostoevsky, the jury trial, and the law* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1930).

<sup>272</sup> Samuel Kuchеров, analysing the Russian legal system of the time, suggests that such institutional injustice was itself a product of institutional malaise, a sentiment which seems to pervade the justifications of the character of the Inquisitor: ‘The judicial reform would have been impossible without the liberation of the serfs, and in its turn an emancipated people could not live under the old administration of justice. The proper functioning of the judicial system is impossible where the majority of the pole is deprived of liberty and is merely the object of rights of other people.’ See Samuel Kuchеров, ‘The Jury as Part of the Russian Judicial Reform of 1864’, *American Slavic and East European Review*, 9.2 (1950), pp. 77-90.

<sup>273</sup> Moss, *Alexander II and the Modernization of Russia*, pp. 85 - 90.

‘... But that was all rot’.<sup>274</sup>

Similarly, in the 1877 trial of Mrs. Dzhunkovsky, Dostoevsky criticises the jury as having no frame of reference within which to judge the conditions that drove Dzhukovsky to behave in the manner she did, and the court system as consequently valuing formalistic *procedure* over proportionate justice, that what is 'remarkable is not that they were acquitted but that they were charged and brought to trial'.<sup>275</sup>

Dostoevsky authored further articles concerning the trials of Kronenberg and Kornilova in December 1877, both individuals accused of child abuse, which the author Fetyukovich later criticised as using an inappropriately empathetic narrative in defence of their actions as being acts of ignorance.<sup>276</sup> When viewed in the context of Dostoevsky's criticisms of the growing abstraction of legal institutions, the Karamazov trial presents, then, a portrayal of a formalized, mechanical process echoing both the Kronenberg and Kornilova trials and the trial of Mrs.

Dzhunkovsky, and representative of the specific operations of the state, of the kind later perceived by Adorno and Horkheimer: ‘The formalization of reason is only the intellectual expression of mechanized production. The means is fetishized...’<sup>277</sup> The apparent ambivalence in the depiction of the expected role of the ‘jury’ becomes an example, in this way, of the capacity which apparently immutable concepts such as truth, fact and justice have to be reconfigured by their institutional settings. As with the trial of Dmitri, Dostoevsky’s journalism reports the juries’ detachment from and *objectification* of the defendant as resulting from a lack of sensibility rather than prejudice, while their interest in the case is depicted as prurient rather than civic. Equally, Dmitri’s jury also provides an interesting contrast to the earlier, more fantastical, encounter between the Inquisitor and the Man, in which the Inquisitor is *both* the judge and jury. Both instances may be viewed as undesirable extremes, for Dostoevsky, and further imply that the content of the main body of *The Brothers Karamazov* was intended to reflect, in part, upon the contemporary failures of the

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<sup>274</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 687.

<sup>275</sup> Dostoevsky, *A Writer's Diary Volume 2:1877-1881*, p. 1048. For more on Dostoevsky and the representation of the jury see Gary Rosenshield, *Western Law, Russian Justice: Dostoevsky, the Jury Trial, and the Law* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1930).

<sup>276</sup> Harriet Murav, *Russia's Legal Fictions* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1998), p. 135.

<sup>277</sup> Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 104.

liberal reforms of the late nineteenth century. Whereas, then, a philosopher such as David Hume suggested, writing in the eighteenth century, in exemplary Enlightenment fashion, that while law may, in some instances, run counter to an individual's private interests, the formalism of the legal system benefits society as a whole, Dostoevsky's journalistic and novelistic depictions reject such a clear differentiation between individual interest and social benefits. Just as the Inquisitor is portrayed as an individual principally defined by his role, so this role is contained within the text's larger depiction of the institution of the Church - an institution with which the fate of the Karamazov family is entangled. In this way, Dostoevsky may be read as arguing throughout *The Brothers Karamazov* for the importance of the individual's role in virtuous social institutions - one instance of which may be seen in his depiction of the jury. 'The Grand Inquisitor' acts, in this regard, as a kind of centralising point within the novel.

In Russia throughout the 'liberal reforms' of this era, there appears to have been a tendency to turn to the Church as a default authority. While the Orthodox Church represented the faith of the nobility, 'Old Believers' and sectarians comprised approximately one third of the Russian population, and the economic interests of the Church were also tied to the existing establishment, as it was dependent upon the State for its income and exempt from paying taxes. Throughout the nineteenth century elementary education was left to the Church, and its influence was such that (even after the many attempted reforms during the reign of Tzar Alexander II) Pobedonostsev could describe the role of the Orthodox Church in 1896 as being 'to inspire the people with respect for the law and for power'.<sup>278</sup> The continuance of such a symbiotic relationship between Church and State may have been read by Dostoevsky as illustrative of the tendency of Alexander's program to stop short of true reform. Thus it appears that a reading of 'The Grand Inquisitor' which analyses the character of the Inquisitor as being a representative of the type of official Dostoevsky feared would emerge from an authoritarian state, positions the Inquisitor's justifications as an 'exposé' (обличение) of the *mind* of such an administration as it is embodied in an individual (and psychologically realistic) figure. Dostoevsky's novel depiction of the administrator figure, by comparison to

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<sup>278</sup> Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev, *Reflection of a Russian Statesman*. trans. by Robert Crozier Long (London: Grant Richards, 1898), p. 5.

earlier depictions, is that rather than being an 'avatar', if you will, of the institution, the Inquisitor's rationales and justifications appear to *pre-empt* those of the systematised power structure he represents, and, in turn, his apparent individual flaws and seemingly self-motivated justifications are themselves represented as allegories for institutional bias and corruption.

### Stupid Socialism

Dostoevsky's journalistic critique of the Tsarist bureaucracy was overt. However, Dostoevsky was equally clear regarding his reservations concerning much of the socialist activism in Russia at the time. Indeed, 'The Grand Inquisitor' itself seems to support the interpretation that while Dostoevsky joined such Socialists in opposing many of the existing dysfunctional social organisations, he feared the potential for the underlying ideals of many forms of Socialism, far from offering a freedom from the tyranny of top-down control, to lead to individuals becoming *more* reliant upon systems, institutions and collective bodies by virtue of their reliance on the power of state as a means of social change.

The 'Grand Inquisitor' is introduced within the novel by the character Ivan as a 'poem' which he is in the process of composing (выдумал), and which he recites to his brother, Alyosha. The 'poem' is set in Seville, during the Spanish Inquisition of the sixteenth century. It is, in effect, a fable describing the journey of 'the Man', and appears to be about the second coming of Christ (there is a level of pseudo-ambiguity about the identity of 'the Man'). The Man walks through the city, and 'He' conveys 'His' identity to the people through 'Light, enlightenment, and power';<sup>279</sup> qualities which will serve as a counterpoint to the qualities of '*miracle, mystery and authority*'<sup>280</sup> (чудо, тайна и авторитет) which the Inquisitor later asserts are the superior virtues of the Church. The Inquisitor, a character loosely based upon the first Grand Inquisitor Tomás de Torquemada, commands his troops to imprison the Man. The Inquisitor subsequently 'interrogates' the Man, but effectively delivers a monologue, as the Man remains silent throughout. The reason for the Man's silence is guessed at by the Inquisitor as being that, were He to speak, '[w]hatever Thou

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<sup>279</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 229.

<sup>280</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 237.

revealist anew will encroach on men's freedom of faith'.<sup>281</sup> At the end of the Inquisitor's exposition, the Man, who at no point confirms or denies His identity, kisses the Inquisitor, a kiss which 'glows in his heart, but the old man adheres to his idea'.<sup>282</sup> The Inquisitor commands the Man to 'Go, and come no more', and the poem ends with: 'Prisoner went away'.<sup>283</sup> The majority of the poem's content comprises the Inquisitor's arguments concerning freedom, whose exposition incorporates the three temptations of Christ as they are described in the New Testament, Matthew 4:1–11.

The monologue of the Inquisitor concerns a re-interpretation of Satan's three temptations, interpreted in a way which appears to imbue (or, possibly, to 'supplement') each temptation with *societal* ramifications (rather than the essentially spiritual or moral meanings they had within the gospel) and to interpret these ramifications.<sup>284</sup> The interpretations which the Inquisitor gives, however, reveal a strong bias towards authoritarianism and against individual faith. The Inquisitor frames the first temptation, that of bread for all, as having the quality of 'miracle'. 'Miracle' becomes, when presented by the Inquisitor, an economic proposition: the removal of want. The Inquisitor asserts that bread was 'the one infallible banner which was offered Thee to make all men bow down to Thee alone'.<sup>285</sup> This first argument sets the tone for the Inquisitor's wider argument by asserting the proposition that Christ misunderstood the 'true' nature of human psychology, that Christ 'dist ask far too much from him [man] - Thou who hast loved him more than Thyself',<sup>286</sup> and that the Church will 'persuade them [mankind] that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to use ... They will be convinced that we are right, for they will remember the horrors ... Thy freedom brought them'.<sup>287</sup>

The second temptation, to 'cast Thyself down' from 'the pinnacle of the temple', constitutes Christ's heavenly protection, and is presented by the Inquisitor as offering

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<sup>281</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 232.

<sup>282</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 243.

<sup>283</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 243.

<sup>284</sup> For more on analysis of the poems relationship with the Gospel, see Ellis Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse: A Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor* (Delaware: ISI Books, 2000).

<sup>285</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 235.

<sup>286</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 237.

<sup>287</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 239.

the potential ability to acquire psychological power over the people.<sup>288</sup> The Inquisitor also asserts that in the absence of 'mystery', mankind 'will worship deeds of sorcery and witchcraft'<sup>289</sup> leading to 'unrest, confusion and unhappiness - that is the present lot of man after Thou didst bear so much for their freedom'.<sup>290</sup> According to the Inquisitor, the Church excels at such displays 'and men rejoiced that they were again led like sheep'.<sup>291</sup>

The third temptation, possession of all kingdoms of the world by accepting 'the sword of Caesar', becomes 'authority' in the Inquisitor's schema, and is described in terms of political power. Specifically, the Inquisitor asserts that human beings desire submission to a universal *state* that can provide universal peace and security: 'we shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us'.<sup>292</sup>

Dostoevsky's representation of the Inquisitor might perhaps be related here to a text such as Saint-Simon's 1825 book *The New Christianity*, which advocated a return to a form of authentic 'Christianity'. Saint-Simon became retrospectively associated with socialism as the term was used to refer to his ideas by later admirers, and it is quite possible, of course, that in Dostoevsky's mind Saint-Simon was not one of the advocates of 'stupid socialism', and that his work was merely co-opted by the later movements of which Dostoevsky disapproved. Nonetheless, it is significant that in *The New Christianity* Saint-Simon argued for what, in today's vernacular, would bear rather more resemblance to a technocracy (a form of government controlled by experts) than a Theocracy (rule by the divine or divinely inspired of the type advocated by Augustine in his *City of God*).<sup>293</sup> As Saint-Simon wrote in *The New Christianity* (1825), 'the new clergy, basically, will... teach the new Christian

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<sup>288</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 236.

<sup>289</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 236.

<sup>290</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 237.

<sup>291</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 237.

<sup>292</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 239.

<sup>293</sup> Pamela Pilbeam suggests that Saint-Simon 'became convinced that the central explanation for contemporary problems lay on the management of the state', and that it was this aspect of Saint-Simon's thought which most anticipated future Socialist thought. See Pamela Pilbeam, *French Socialists before Marx* (Teddington: Acumen, 2000), p. 16.

doctrine, which the leaders of the new Church will work unceasingly to bring to perfection':<sup>294</sup>

The New Christianity will have ... its clergy, and there will be leaders among this clergy ... the New Christians will regard the moral doctrine as the most important element of their religion; they will look upon ritual and dogma only as accessories ... All men must behave as brothers toward one another; and this ... will be presented as the principle that today must be the aim of all religious activity.<sup>295</sup>

Saint-Simon argues that it is, above all, industrial advancement that heralds such social change, describing how 'the more society progresses, the more its religious rituals have to be perfected; for the object of religious ritual is to draw the attention of men regularly assembling on their days of rest to the interests common to all members of society, to the general interests of mankind'.<sup>296</sup> Dostoevsky's Inquisitor, in stark contrast, has no plans for social development. The Inquisitor does not describe his role, or the role of the Church, as being to advance humanity, rather he describes their role as being to prevent humanity's decline. If there are, then, certain similarities between Saint-Simon's description of the New Christianity, and the Inquisitor's description of his own role, this relies upon a co-option of Saint-Simon's central ideas in 'socialist' thought, and in particular the place of the state within it, rather than any direct instantiation of them. To the extent that 'The Grand Inquisitor' story may therefore be read as engaging with the exploitation and misinterpretation of the ideas of thinkers such as Saint-Simon, the Inquisitor character's justifications seem to illustrate the abuses of ideology Dostoevsky apparently associated with 'stupid socialism' more generally.

In fact, it is striking the degree to which Dostoevsky's early writing (as with, for example, the character in *The Landlady*, Ordynov) appears supportive of many of those positions advanced in favour of 'Utopian socialism'; a socialism which, according to Marx and Engels, 'inculcated universal asceticism and social levelling

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<sup>294</sup> Claude Henri Saint-Simon, "The New Christianity. Dialogues Between a Conservative and an Innovator", *Socialist Thought: A Documentary History*, ed. by Albert Fried and Ronald Sanders (New York: Coloumbia University Press, 1964), p. 82.

<sup>295</sup> *Socialist Thought: A Documentary History*, ed. by Fried and Sanders, p. 82.

<sup>296</sup> *Socialist Thought: A Documentary History*, ed. by Fried and Sanders, p. 83.



in its crudest form'.<sup>297</sup> During his imprisonment and exile in 1849, however, Dostoevsky appears to have come to believe that life under a radical socialist programme, which *enforced* communal living and a pooling of resources, would constitute the generalized conditions of a prison camp. Dostoevsky himself admitted that *Notes from the House of the Dead* was an autobiographical account, and it may be assumed that it was his experiences during this incarceration which lead to his apparent disenchantment with the 'socialist state' that was described by contemporary Utopians as a form of communal living.<sup>298</sup>

Dostoevsky's account of prison life included his reaction to the suppression of individual autonomy he found in prison:

Later I came to know that, besides the deprivation of liberty, besides the compulsory labour, there is another torment in prison life, also more unbearable than all the rest. This is being forced to live herded together. Community life, of course, exists elsewhere ... but I am certain that every prisoner, the majority, of course, unconsciously, felt this ordeal.<sup>299</sup>

Rather than valuing the scarce luxuries afforded them more, or becoming removed from material desires, or forming a commune in which goods were distributed based upon one's ability to provide or upon one's need, Dostoevsky describes instead how a prisoner would 'squander all ... [their] earnings, down to the last copeck, in one day and then once more plod away at work for months, until the next outbreak'.<sup>300</sup>

In fact, the 'stupid socialism' Dostoevsky describes appears to be, above all, the 'Utopian Socialism' advocated by Nikolai Chernyshevsky, Nikolai Dobrolyubov and others within Russia itself - that form of socialism promoted in the journal *Sovermennik* ('*The Contemporary*'), which ran from 1836 to 1866. This magazine appears to have become associated in the consciousness of the middle and upper

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<sup>297</sup> Marx and Engel's description, taken from *The Communist Manifesto. The Marx and Engels Reader*, ed. by Tucker, p. 497.

<sup>298</sup> Dostoevsky writes: 'I have scarcely ever spoken in print of my prison life; I wrote *Notes from the House of the Dead* fifteen years ago using an invested narrator'. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Writer's Diary Volume 1: 1873-1976*. trans. by Kenneth Lantz (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1994), p. 315.

<sup>299</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Memoirs from the House of the Dead* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 25.

<sup>300</sup> Dostoevsky, *Memoirs from the House of the Dead*, p. 46.

class with radical socialism, as seen when it was forced to close down as part of the official response to the assassination attempt on Alexander II in the June of 1866. Dostoevsky's critique of socialism should not, then, be confused with a direct critique of, say, Marxism, which in 1866 had yet to become a major influence in the Russian socialist movement. Indeed, one might note some marked similarities between Marx's analysis of bureaucracy in his 1843 *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* as a 'hierarchy of knowledge',<sup>301</sup> in which for the bureaucrat 'the world is a mere object to be manipulated by him',<sup>302</sup> and the Inquisitor's assertion that the Church 'proclaimed ourselves sole rulers of the earth ... and shall be Caesars, and then we shall plan the universal happiness of man'.<sup>303</sup> Similarly, Marx also associates the Church with bureaucracy, and, in so doing, argues that both religions and state bureaucracies utilise ideology primarily to achieve benefits for their individual members (or class):

[T]he Catholic Church was the *real presence* of ... the Holy Trinity ... In bureaucracy the state interest and particular private aim is established in such a way that the *state interest* becomes a *particular* private aim.<sup>304</sup>

Arguments around the role of the State, and the role bureaucracy should perform within the State, were central to the debates around the various contemporary interpretations of Socialism, and comparisons between elements of these interpretations may be drawn with aspects of *The Brothers Karamazov*. Hegel located the dignity of man in his being a vehicle of rational will and morality in the will of universal reason, to which man, as a rational being, will seek to conform. The State, for Hegel, is man's second nature, achieved through escalation of common life: the family, which provides a unity based on feeling; civil society, achieved through contracts and external ties; and the State, in which unity is mediated by reason. The central tenant of Hegel's thesis, that the universe exhibits reason and that this reason

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<sup>301</sup> *The Marx and Engels Reader*, ed. by Tucker, p. 24.

<sup>302</sup> *The Marx and Engels Reader*, ed. by Tucker, p. 25.

<sup>303</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 238.

<sup>304</sup> *The Marx and Engels Reader*, ed. by Tucker, p. 25.

is God (or *Geist*)<sup>305</sup>, and, more specifically, that society is the manifestation of man's rationality, is however directly denied by the Inquisitor, telling the man: 'I swear, man is weaker and baser by nature than Thou hast believed him! ... He is weak and vile ... unrest, confusion and unhappiness - that is the present lot of man after Thou dost bear so much of their freedom!'<sup>306</sup> Charles Taylor notes a direct convergence between Marx and Hegel's interpretation of the division of labour and industrialisation in relation to personal empowerment; and Taylor notes a dichotomy between Hegel's perception of bourgeois economy as something to be contained within the ultimate reason of the State with Marx's belief that the State was itself conditioned by economic relations.<sup>307</sup> The Inquisitor, however, sees the State as the direct consequence of inherent human weakness:

'all that man seeks on earth... someone to worship, someone to keep his conscience, and some means of uniting ... Mankind as a whole has always strived to organize a universal state. There have been many great nations... the more highly they were developed the more unhappy they were, for they felt more acutely than other people the craving for world-wide union.'<sup>308</sup>

This is at the crux of the Inquisitor's rejection of the man (Christ) and the Inquisitor's belief that the institution of the Church has improved upon the naiveté of Christianity, promising that:

'...we shall persuade them that they will only become free when they renounce their freedom to us and submit to us. And shall we be right or

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<sup>305</sup> Despite the popular representation of Hegel as an advocate for the Prussian state being, in some sense, an actualisation of *Geist*, considerable controversy remains to this day as to how Hegel's conception of *Geist* is to be read. When read within the context of an ongoing philosophical debate as to the nature of man, Hegel sympathised with the concept of forms which, when realised clarifies or in some sense enhances an underlying abstract principle. And thus, Hegel argued, the collective expressions of individuals as they oppose and co-ordinate with one another, are clarified and embodied in such forms as the state. Debate remains, however, as to how best read Hegel's conception of *Geist* in theological terms, particularly in terms of how man can best know God, or the precise dynamic which Hegel conceived of the changes of *Geist* in terms of religious practice. See Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 480.

<sup>306</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 237.

<sup>307</sup> See Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 437.

<sup>308</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 238.

shall we be lying? They will be convinced that we are right, for they will remember the horrors of slavery and confusion to which Thy freedom brought them.<sup>309</sup>

The Inquisitor's argument, that true freedom is the psychological refuge from the horrors of slavery and confusion engendered by freedom, could be read as a dystopian rendering of a society in which 'conflicts within civil society were held in check and rationally synthesized in the supreme will of the state', as Kolakowski interpreted Hegel as desiring.<sup>310</sup> The obviously maleficent manner in which the Inquisitor presents such a system is reminiscent of Marx's objection to the same assertion by Hegel - Marx's objection being that such dynamics inevitably engender 'contradiction between his private capacity and his capacity as a citizen'.<sup>311</sup> It appears, therefore, that the Inquisitor desires to not only have the Church intercede with society's ordering, but with the citizen's very *thoughts*. This appears, too, to be Dostoevsky's primary over-arching objection to the old Tzarist regime, the reformist agenda, and to the Russian socialists: that these models all, in their different ways, aspire to administrate the internal dynamics of the individual.

Within the context of *The Brothers Karamazov*, the world described by the Inquisitor would, the novel suggests in an exposition of Alyosha's beliefs, lead inevitably then to what is described as a socialist state:

[I]f he [Alyosha] had decided that God and immortality did not exist, he would at once have become an atheist and a socialist. *For socialism is not merely the labour question, it is before all things the atheistic question, the question of the form taken by atheism to-day, the question of the tower of Babel built without God, not to mount to heaven from earth but to set up heaven on earth.*<sup>312</sup>

If Dostoevsky, by his own assertion, intended the poem to comment upon the 'stupid socialism' of the mid to late nineteenth century, then, writing 'as himself', he also

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<sup>309</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 239.

<sup>310</sup> Leszek Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown*. trans. by P. S. Falla (London: W. W. Norton, 2005), p. 125.

<sup>311</sup> Kolakowski, *Main Currents of Marxism: The Founders, the Golden Age, the Breakdown*, p. 125.

<sup>312</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 20.

provides a counter in his diary, a few years before commencing work on the novel, to the claims made by the Inquisitor:

An organism as exalted as Russia cannot be satisfied with material advantage alone, cannot be satisfied with 'bread' alone. This is neither an ideal nor a set of empty phrases: as proof, we have the whole Russian People ...<sup>313</sup>

'The Grand Inquisitor' is not, in terms of a first reading at least, obscure. The Inquisitor clearly lays out his ideology and explains his reasons for his actions. The idea that society is, in some sense, opposed to (or at least suppressive of) the individual and is, at best, disinterested in the individuated states of being of individuals, such as faith, love or authenticity, is articulated by the Inquisitor. And, as a general theme, this relation between individual freedom and state cohesion is one that is certainly explored within much early 'socialist' philosophy in the wake of Hegel and Rousseau. For example, Rousseau's description of how an individual who seeks power should act bears some striking similarities to the justifications of the Inquisitor:

Anyone who dares to undertake the founding of a people should feel himself capable of changing human nature, so to speak, of transforming each individual, who himself is a perfect and solitary whole, into part of a greater whole from which this individual receives, in a way, his life and his being; of altering the human constitution in order to strengthen it, and of substituting a partial and artificial existence for the physical and independent existence we have all received from nature.<sup>314</sup>

While Rousseau's interpretation of community as a collective venture seeks to raise its constituent members to a new level, however, Dostoevsky presents his Inquisitor as a direct inversion of this ideal: one who seeks to co-opt this process, asserting that

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<sup>313</sup> Dostoevsky, *Writer's Diary Volume 1: 1873-1976*, p. 659. Here 'the whole Russian People' may be read in terms of Dostoevsky's sympathies with the *Pochennichestvo* movement, and reflects an underlying idealizing of the relationship between the Russian people and the land. These sympathies appear to be most evident among Dostoevsky's works in *The Devils*.

<sup>314</sup> Alan Ritter and Julia Conway Bond Anella, *Rousseau's Political Writings* (London and New York: Norton Critical Edition, 1988), p. 108.

'man is tormented by no greater anxiety than to find someone quickly to whom he can hand over that gift of freedom'.<sup>315</sup> As he continues: the people 'will be convinced that we are right, for they will remember the horrors of slavery and confusion to which Thy freedom brought them'.<sup>316</sup> Here, Dostoevsky may not be offering a counter to Rousseau, or the wider ideals of a 'greater whole', but, rather, suggesting how an emphasis upon the *means* rather than the *ends* of such endeavours may lead to greater alienation.

Dostoevsky's Inquisitor is, in some sense, seeking to 'liberate' the ideals of the Church from the founder and transpose this authority to the institution. In the broadest terms, the process of establishing core principles with the goal of their being adopted en masse through the formation of 'universal' institutions underpins much of early socialist thought. However, this process opens the way for the phenomenon which 'The Grand Inquisitor' examines: the danger that as individuated interventions (such as individual patronage or even aristocratic rule in which any single figure with enough authority may intervene, be appealed to, or remove) are abandoned (or even outlawed) in favour of collective responses (such as a jury or local councils, in which the regulating effects of responsibility and accountability become weakened) the power of abstract systems and their 'personification' in system regulators will increase. In fact, the point is that Dostoevsky was not attacking *any* precise position advocated by any one of the many forms of socialism active within Russia during the mid-nineteenth century. Rather, reading the Inquisitor as an administrator character suggests, the 'poem' constitutes a clear but more general warning about how all revolutionary or reformist ideals may be perverted, via the mediation of the state and its bureaucratic administrators, for institutional (as well as personal) ends.

#### Men of Systems - Reservations concerning Enlightenment

The theme of the betrayal of ideals in 'The Grand Inquisitor' is no way limited purely to an engagement with 'stupid socialism' or the Tsar's Bureaucracy. There are multiple instances in Dostoevsky's writing where the values and institutions derived from Russia's early history, such as the Orthodox Church and the village commune,

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<sup>315</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 235.

<sup>316</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 239.

are placed in opposition to distorted representations of ideals held to be synonymous with 'Western rationalism', and many of the Enlightenment values championed in Russia in the second half of the eighteenth century by Catherine the Great. In 'Rebellion', for example, Ivan recounts the story of a prisoner, who converted the night before execution, and was therefore met and embraced by 'the aristocratic and well-bred society of the town', but was still executed.<sup>317</sup> This pamphlet, Ivan relates, was 'translated into Russian by some Russian philanthropists of aristocratic rank and evangelical aspirations, and has been distributed gratis for the enlightenment of the people'.<sup>318</sup> Ivan claims that although, to Russians, it seems 'absurd to cut off a man's head, because he has become our brother and has found grace', that Russians 'have our own speciality', which is 'inflicting pain'.<sup>319</sup> Ivan's anecdote seems to depict precisely the adoption of the language of faith to justify the use of force which he, Ivan, relays on behalf of the Inquisitor, and Dostoevsky's overt references to the proliferation and approval by the aristocracy of this process serve as the introductory passages leading to 'The Grand Inquisitor'.

Priscilla Mayer has argued that Dostoevsky, and other writers of the era, responded to the intellectual caché which French literature had achieved within the Russian aristocracy. Mayer argues that, in *Crime and Punishment* in particular, Dostoevsky 'sets French subtexts into dialogue with the force that was to overcome the moral failure he feels they represent', thereby responding to the French tradition by emphasising morality and philosophy and drawing on the Russian narrative traditions including Pushkin and Orthodox Christian writings.<sup>320</sup> More broadly, 'The Grand Inquisitor' (as well as several of Dostoevsky's other works) may be seen to be presenting corrupted interpretations of Enlightenment ideas, possibly mimicking what may have been seen as the Russian aristocracy's co-opting of such ideas for their own ends.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>317</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 221.

<sup>318</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 221.

<sup>319</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 221.

<sup>320</sup> Priscilla Meyer, *How the Russians Read the French* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2010), p. 89.

<sup>321</sup> One such example of the extent to which the Russian aristocracy's interest in the Enlightenment was cosmetic may be the Grand Commission of 1767, set up by Catherine the Great. Called in order to administer the new lands and ensure the fair treatment of their inhabitants, Catherine ordered this royal commission to proffer a series of laws that would help foster an age of Enlightenment in Russia. Catherine herself wrote *The Instructions*

In broader terms the relationship proposed in Dostoevsky's later works between Russia and Western Europe is a contentious one, in which Russia must beware of cultural domination, with the implicit suggestion that Russia's ruling classes may be adopting European social structures and institutions for personal gain, at the cost of Russia's identity. There appears to be no doubt that Dostoevsky was well versed in European literature ('He liked to read Walter Scott... Charles Dickens... he did not like Thackerary. He liked to read Balzac'),<sup>322</sup> yet, equally, he appears to have acutely felt, and even resented, the influence of European culture in Russia:

Who of us Russians (those, at least, that read periodicals) does not know Europe twice as well as he knows Russia? I have put down 'twice' merely out of politeness, I should probably have said 'ten times better'.<sup>323</sup>

If Dostoevsky, therefore may be seen as having, in some sense, 'translated' the realist novel into a 'Russian' context, both in terms of content and in terms of form, in order to use a favoured mode of artistic expression (the 'language', if you will) of the Russian Upper Classes and establishments,<sup>324</sup> he also appears to have intended to use it to deliver both a direct criticism of unthinking adoption of Western European culture and to present existing Russian folk culture as colourful and intellectually vigorous. Auerbach interpreted Dostoevsky's goals as being broadly 'thematic' in this

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*to the Commissioners for Composing a New Code of Laws*, which were heavily influenced by Montesquieu's *L'Esprit*, and, naturally, assumed Russia would be governed by an absolute monarchy. This 'natural Situation', Catherine wrote, is 'clearly demonstrated' by the fact that 'it is better to be subject to the Laws under one Master, than to be subservient to many': '13. What is the true End of Monarchy? Not to deprive People of their natural Liberty; but to correct their Actions, in order to attain the *Supreme Good*.' See Catherine II, *The Grand Instructions to the Commissioners Appointed to Frame a New Code of Laws for the Russian Empire*. trans. by Michael Tatischeff (London: T. Jefferys, 1768), p. 80. The royal commission convened for a total of seven months before being adjourned due to the outbreak of the Turkish War. No section of the code was ever completed.

<sup>322</sup> Anna Dostoevskaya, 'Anna Dostoevskaya: Rare Reminiscences from the Personal Diary', in *The Dostoevsky Archive: Firsthand Accounts of the Novelist from Contemporaries*, ed. by Peter Sekirin (Jefferson: McFarland & Company Inc., 1973) (p. 177).

<sup>323</sup> Dostoevsky, *Winter Notes on Summer Impressions*, p. 3.

<sup>324</sup> Interestingly, Russian authors may have also adopted the industrial methods of Western European authors to circulate their works in the form of newspaper serialisation and the 'thick journal'. See Franco Moretti, *The Novel, Volume I: History, Geography and Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 411.



sense, citing Lacerteux's argument that Russian literature became a conduit for a particular set of themes and modes of presentation:

'[Russian literature] ...is based on a Christian and traditionally patriarchal concept of the creatural dignity of every human individual regardless of social rank and position, and hence that it is fundamentally related rather to old-Christian than to modern occidental realism'.<sup>325</sup>

These 'anti-themes' may, collectively, be read as rejecting many of the underlying assumptions perceived by the authors in Western Europe and the Western-Europhilic Upper Classes, Liberals such as the character Pyotor Alexandrovich Miusov, whose material advantages so cushioned them from the practical impact social upheaval 'of the type common in the [eighteen] forties and fifties' that the Paris Revolution of February 1848 could be classed as, in a phrase from *The Brothers Karamazov*, 'one of the most comforting recollections'.<sup>326</sup>

We can also see that Dostoevsky was consciously and overtly entering into pan-European debates surrounding a number of social and political issues, ranging from the role of the state to modern economic behaviour. Yet, as Moretti observes, in Russian nineteenth-century literature, including Dostoevsky, one often finds 'an uncanny radicalization of Western ideas that liberates their destructive potential', 'placing bourgeois values *as far as possible from their original context*, to capture their unique mix of greatness and catastrophe'.<sup>327</sup>

In this light it is worth remarking that there are notable similarities between, for example, the Inquisitor and the 'man of systems' described in Smith's (1758) *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Significantly, Scottish Enlightenment ideals, imported into Russia, are also referenced directly within Dostoevsky's earlier *Crime and Punishment* (1866). Two passages, for example, describe 'political economy' as one of many confused misconstrued justifications used by Raskolnikov:

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<sup>325</sup> Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis*. trans. by Erich Auerbach (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 522.

<sup>326</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 5.

<sup>327</sup> Franco Moretti, *The Bourgeois* (London: Verso, 2013), p. 168.

‘But Mr. Lebeziatnikov who keeps up with modern ideas explained the other day that compassion is forbidden nowadays by science itself, and *that that's what is done now in England*, where there is political economy.’

‘[I]f I were told, “love thy neighbour,” what came of it? ... Economic truth adds that the better private affairs are organised in society--the more whole coats, so to say—the firmer are its foundations and the better is the common welfare organised too. Therefore, in acquiring wealth solely and exclusively for myself, I am acquiring, so to speak, for all ... as a consequence of the general advance.’<sup>328</sup>

The ‘man of systems’, who is ‘so enamoured with the supposed beauty of his own ideal plan of government, that he cannot suffer the smallest deviation from any part of it’, directly corresponds, too, to the heart of the Inquisitor’s polemic: that neither the Inquisitor’s representation of the Church nor the man of system’s government ‘consider that the pieces upon the chess-board have no other principle of motion besides that which the hand impresses upon them’.<sup>329</sup> Dostoevsky through the character of Ivan emphasises, however, different aspects of the Inquisitor’s motivation than those of Smith’s man of systems who ‘goes on to establish [the system] completely and in all its parts, without any regard either to the great interests, or to the strong prejudices which may oppose it’.<sup>330</sup> The aspect of the Inquisitor’s character that demands that ‘the man’ ‘mayest not add to what has been said of old, and mayest not take from men the freedom which Thou dost exalt when Thou wast on earth’ has moved beyond merely justifying the system, to this additional equation of the system itself with a moral imperative.<sup>331</sup> Thus the Inquisitor ‘begs the question’, by first crediting the system with the traits of a moral imperative, and then arguing that these traits contribute towards its status as ‘moral’.<sup>332</sup> Smith contrasts the man of systems with the ‘man whose public spirit is

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<sup>328</sup> *Crime and Punishment* was originally published in 1866 in monthly instalments. Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*. trans. by Jessie Coulson, ed. by Jessie Senior Coulson and George Gibian, 3 edn (London and New York: Norton Critical Edition 1989), pp. 13, 129. Emphasis in the first citation is mine.

<sup>329</sup> Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Edinburgh: Printed for A. Millar, A. Kincaid and J. Bell, 1812), I, p. 190.

<sup>330</sup> Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 190.

<sup>331</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 232.

<sup>332</sup> Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 232.

prompted altogether by humanity and benevolence' and 'will respect the established powers and privileges even of individuals, and still more those of the great orders and societies, into which the state is divided'.<sup>333</sup> Where Smith contrasts the man of systems with the man of benevolence, Dostoevsky contrasts 'the man' (Jesus) against the Inquisitor. Just as Smith suggested a man compelled by a public spirit would avoid force in favour of understanding, Dostoevsky implies that the Inquisitor lacks the ability to respond intuitively to 'the man', and is instead compelled by his role within society to behave coercively.<sup>334</sup>

In *Crime and Punishment*, the character of Petrovitch attempts to justify his crimes by citing ideas which appear to be drawn from Smith:

Science now tells us, love yourself before all men, for everything in the world rests on self-interest. You love yourself and manage your own affairs properly and your coat remains whole. Economic truth adds that the better private affairs are organised in society--the more whole coats, so to say ~the firmer are its foundations and the better is the common welfare organised too. Therefore, in acquiring wealth solely and exclusively for myself, I am acquiring, so to speak, for all, and helping to bring to pass my neighbour's getting a little more than a torn coat; and that not from private, personal liberality, but as a consequence of the general advance.<sup>335</sup>

This is Petrovitch's own interpretation of Darwinian theory and laissez faire economics, but, in order to attribute motive, Petrovitch's citation of a misunderstood Classical Economics is effective because of its context, rather than its content: Petrovitch could just as easily mis-cite Augustine's doctrine of dualism or Machiavelli's theory of the fox and lion. It is the fact that Petrovitch's justifications for his opportunism appear to be *internally authentic* (that is, genuinely believed) which leads the reader to question both the idea espoused, and Petrovitch's interpretation. Just as with Petrovitch, the Inquisitor's arguments are, it seems, not intended to be presented in order to be challenged or to present a deliberate series of

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<sup>333</sup> Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 190.

<sup>334</sup> Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 190.

<sup>335</sup> Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 190.

propositions leading to a conclusion. Rather, Petrovitch and the Inquisitor are presented as character studies illustrating the dangers of any internalising of such 'abstract' arguments, and then taking the arguments themselves as end points rather than as a means to uncover truth or ensure right action. In this way, both Petrovitch and the Inquisitor – each of whom have reasoned arguments for their actions, and display reason in their exposition and advocacy of them - seem to challenge a fundamental premise of Enlightenment thought that reason alone is sufficient in addressing social and personal welfare issues. It is easy to draw an analogy here between the arguments advanced by Petrovitch and the Inquisitor with the manner of institution with which each character seems to identify: Petrovitch with the solipsistic individualism of an unregulated 'civil society', the Inquisitor with the authoritarianism of the state. If Dostoevsky does suggest an alternative to the Enlightenment belief that society may be best served through the establishment of a set of fundamental principles, imposed and proliferated through institutions founded upon these principles, it is that virtues are not external criteria to be imposed. In particular, Dostoevsky appears, through his favourable depiction of Zosima's life in *The Brothers Karamazov*, to suggest that, *contra* the Inquisitor, virtues are qualities to be achieved through acts and faith rather than rules to be enforced, and that which is virtuous must be sought out and applied on an individual basis.

#### An Omen - Conclusions and implications

It seems Dostoevsky sought to depict the internal justifications used by those who would pursue ideological ends blind to the potential costs (in this instance, to the costs to existing communities and customs, and in terms of personal relationships with one's environment). If this is in some sense true, it follows that critics who have taken his work out of its specific historical and ideological context may have missed many of its intended references, and subsequently interpreted the Inquisitor rather too 'literally' - as a character who illustrates 'innate' traits within humanity in general. The reading of the story by Erich Fromm, in his book *Escape from Freedom*, appears, for example, to embody such a 'dislocation' in reading Dostoevsky outside of his critical engagement with the ideas and politics of his time, and instead seeing within the poem evidence of a 'universal' truth that '[b]oth the masochistic and

sadistic strivings tend to help the individual to escape his unbearable feeling of loneliness and powerlessness'.<sup>336</sup>

Notoriously, Fromm analyzes the conceptions of freedom and authority espoused by the Grand Inquisitor and relates these to modern political movements, especially the phenomenon of Hitler's Nazi Germany. In this way, Fromm connects the attitudes expressed by the Inquisitor directly to Hitler's understanding of how to mobilize the masses, quoting extensively from *Mein Kampf*, and emphasizing Hitler's insight that the Nazi movement provided security and safety for people who feared the terrible uncertainty in Germany after the First World War.

In this situation [of powerlessness] to quote a telling description of Dostoevsky, in *The Brothers Karamazov* he has 'no more pressing need than the one to find somebody to whom he can surrender, as quickly as possible, that gift of freedom which he, the unfortunate creature, was born with'.<sup>337</sup>

If Fromm implies that this may be taken as an unchanging capacity of the human condition – albeit one that achieves an extreme expression in fascism – a reading of the Inquisitor as an administrator character, it could be argued, relocates the poem, by contrast, within the particular historical and cultural context within which it was composed. Such a reading appears significantly more telling for an awareness of how power and freedom were perceived in Russia during the late nineteenth century.

In fact, the attack within 'The Grand Inquisitor' on Utopian Socialism is perhaps most accurately read (possibly in spite of Dostoevsky's own intentions) as a summation or postscript to a failed enterprise. Indeed, it appears what Dostoevsky most firmly intended the Inquisitor to represent was how the imposition of a 'top down' order, no matter how well intentioned, would benefit those already in power, already corrupt, and already exploiting the Russian people. Frank reads the poem as effectively Dostoevsky's attempt 'to praise Him for protecting the very foundation

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<sup>336</sup> Erich Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2001), p. 130.

<sup>337</sup> Fromm, *The Fear of Freedom*, p. 130.

of man's humanity as Dostoevsky conceived it'.<sup>338</sup> In this way he built upon the figure of the administrator character and provided it with a newly internalized and psychologically 'real' narrative and voice.

The story of 'The Grand Inquisitor' itself, despite strong central themes, offers no clear solutions, and its ending appears deliberately open to interpretation. Criticism of the poem seems to support this deliberately open, 'Rorschach' quality. D. H. Lawrence reads the kiss, for example, as 'the kiss of acquiescence to the Inquisitor'<sup>339</sup>, while Rosen objects to reading the poem apart from the main body of the novel, arguing that the ambiguity of the poem itself is irrelevant when viewed in the context of the pro-Christian message of *The Brothers Karamazov*, for which (quoting Dostoevsky) '*The whole novel serves as an answer*'.<sup>340</sup> Set within the wider context of the novel, however, Ivan's 'poem' appears most significantly to be setting the stage for the later introduction and examination of Alyosha's mentor Father Zosima, and this character's alternate interpretation of the role of the individual within society. The chapter 'Notes on the Life in God of the Elder Zosima' describes a key moment in his coming to faith. When Zosima was a young man, the woman he loved decided to marry another man. Filled with vengeance, Zosima challenged his rival to a duel. After a drunken night prior to the duel, Zosima asked himself 'what am I worth, that another man, a fellow creature, made in the likeness and image of God, should serve me', and remembers the dying words of this brother, Markel:

'Mother, my little heart, in truth we are each responsible to all for all, it's only that men don't know this. If they knew it, the world would be a paradise at once.'<sup>341</sup>

Zosima's subsequent epiphany, that it was possible that he, himself, was 'more than all others responsible for all, a greater sinner than all men in the world' leads him to

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<sup>338</sup> Joseph Frank, *The Mantle of the Prophet, 1871-1881* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 616.

<sup>339</sup> D. H. Lawrence: *Selected Literary Criticism*, ed. by Anthony Beal (New York: Viking, 1966), p. 234.

<sup>340</sup> Nathan Rosen, 'Style and Structure in the Brothers Karamazov: The Grand Inquisitor and the Russian Monk', *Russian Literature Triquarterly*, 357 (1971), pp. 44-45.

<sup>341</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 277.

seek the forgiveness from the servant he had beaten whilst drunk the night before, and then from his prospective duelling partner.<sup>342</sup>

According to Zosima, it is not the state or institution, but the Christian realization that we are guilty, not only for our own failings but are also implicated in the wrongdoings of *all* people that moves us out of our atomistic, self-absorbed and self-imposed shackles and frees us to experience love and intimacy with God and others. For Zosima this is not simply a personal realisation, but one with universal implications: that the 'salvation of Russia comes from the people'.<sup>343</sup> Indeed, Zosima, as a man who responds to his environment by drawing on his past and engaging with his community, might be viewed as the direct counterpart to the Inquisitor in this respect.

Couched this time within the context of a critique of the Catholic Church, in *The Idiot* the following words are spoken by the character of Prince Myshkin:

‘Roman Catholicism in its essence .... is not exclusively a theological question. For socialism, too, is the child of Catholicism and the intrinsic Catholic nature! It, too, like its brother atheism, was begotten of despair ... in order to replace the lost moral power of religion, to quench the spiritual thirst of parched humanity, and save it not by Christ, but also by violence!’<sup>344</sup>

A constant external influence upon Dostoevsky throughout his literary career was a long sequence of social upheavals, in which alternative systems of social order were considered, and in which the power of bureaucracy and institution continued to rise. Dostoevsky's 'The Grand Inquisitor', when viewed as constructed around an administrator character, suggests an attempt to highlight the potentially alienating effects of institutions and administrations, and to agitate for a reappraisal of those means of existing collective organisation embodied in the ‘concrete’ notion of the ‘people’, which have been abandoned in the quest for reform. The Inquisitor himself

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<sup>342</sup> This may be viewed as an inclusion of the Slavic Orthodox Christian concept of ‘Sobornost’, the experience of the harmony of ‘togetherness’ or ‘belongingness’. See Ellis Sandoz, *Political Apocalypse, a Study of Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor* (Washington DC: ISI Books, 2000).

<sup>343</sup> Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov*, p. 293.

<sup>344</sup> Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Idiot*. trans. by Pevear and Volokhonsky (Wellington: Forgottenbooks, 1868), p. 602.

may be read as the quintessential representation of an individual who has alienated himself from the rest of humanity through the positioning of an institution between himself and his fellow man. The Inquisitor views mankind as weak, selfish and petty, but refuses to appreciate his own complicity in this state of affairs. Thus Dostoevsky depicts the Inquisitor as an administrator character in order to illustrate how institutions, bureaucracies and administrations - regardless of their founding principles - may precisely alienate mankind from itself.



**‘Their Administration was a squeeze, nothing more’: *Heart of Darkness* and the monopoly**

Its impressionistic descriptions, non-linear nature, and framed narration cast *Heart of Darkness* as a work open to wide-ranging interpretations. However, in approaching the text with particular attention to the many characters who may be read as administrator characters, this chapter will attempt to demonstrate that Kurtz, the Company men, and ‘the Administration’ (significantly, Marlow uses the terms ‘Administration’ and ‘the Company’ interchangeably) act within *Heart of Darkness* as manifestations of a kind of ‘unifying principle’, which, collectively, re-present the noble claims made by various figures within the text in defence of colonialism so as to portray them as disingenuous and corrupt. These ‘manifestations’, indicative of the forms of organisation and exploitation underlying colonialism, are presented symbolically rather than journalistically and emerge, I suggest, through the depictions of Kurtz, the Company Administration, the sleeping sickness, and an assortment of emblematic items in the novella which collectively form a causal chain that implicates Europe in those atrocities performed in the name of ‘civilisation’ of which it often presented itself as ‘formally’ ignorant.

As has been widely recognised, *Heart of Darkness* breaks with traditional expectations of the novella form. Conrad incorporates elements of formal experimentation (most obviously seen in the impressionistic descriptive style), and while *Heart of Darkness* lacks subplots, the intense focus upon Marlow’s internal journey is choreographed against the journey which occupies the majority of the plot, producing encounters which are often simultaneously metaphors for both wider global interactions and Marlow’s own psychological development. The novella also incorporates multiple points of view (through the use of layered and unreliable narration) and a sense of generic adaptability (by containing elements of farce, satire, horror, and the epic) that are more often associated with a full novel. It appears that in writing *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad treated such nineteenth-century ‘realist’ norms as the linear narrative, the unifying, reliable narrator, unambiguous symbolism, and internally motivated characters, with a degree of flexibility and ambiguity. Hence, linear narrative is replaced by weaving, non-linear recollections; the narration is

highly subjective; events have symbolic importance and highly symbolic items and descriptions have multiple possible interpretations; and, most importantly for our purposes, characters may often be read as if each is, above all, a *symptom* of some larger system or other phenomenon, reflecting their situation, their location and their culpability. Thus, when viewed through the prism of the administrator character, *Heart of Darkness* invites an approach to reading the novella, I will argue, as if reading a collection of symptoms and abstractions, intended to point towards the point at which formal language and symbolism breaks down and phenomena become ineffable.

It is broadly accepted that Conrad was required to move beyond traditional literary techniques to satisfactorily depict a story which incorporated his own experiences in the Congo. Leavis described Conrad as using 'objective correlatives': details and facts which have 'specificities of emotion and suggestion with them'.<sup>345</sup> Fothergill has even noted how Conrad used punctuation to add undertones to his passages.<sup>346</sup> Further to these stylistic choices, Conrad appears strongly driven by a desire to engage directly with politics and ideology. Conrad's interest in the causal relationship between character and systematic environment -- the internalisation of systematised power -- is drawn into sharp focus through this relationship with Dostoevsky. Ruppel has argued that Conrad's individual novels may be viewed as depending 'more on genre than on any overarching political perspective', with *Heart of Darkness* engaging with 'the politics of contemporary colonial fiction and the imperial Gothic'.<sup>347</sup> Ruppel extends this reading by noting that Conrad's well documented desire to engage in intellectual and literary 'conflict' with Dostoevsky is very apparent in *Under Western Eyes*, which includes direct references to *Crime and Punishment* in plot construction (both are character driven, both revolve around the committing of a crime and the subsequent persecution and confession), characterisation (both prominently include a psychologically conflicted and politically engaged student who feels persecuted by officialdom). *Under Western Eyes*, however, provides a direct and overt commentary upon the Russian autocracy

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<sup>345</sup> F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (Portland: Peregrine 1986), p. 202.

<sup>346</sup> Anthony Fothergill, 'Cannibalising Traditions: Representation and Critique in *Heart of Darkness*', in *Under Postcolonial Eyes: Joseph Conrad after Empire*, ed. by Myrtle Hooper Gail Fincham (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1996), pp. 65-77. See below for further discussion in relation to the administrator character.

<sup>347</sup> Richard Ruppel, *A Political Genealogy of Joseph Conrad* (Idaho Falls: Lexington Books 2014), p. 110.

and seems to suggest Ziemianitch's internal conflict is a response to external, political and bureaucratic, influences, whereas Dostoevsky's Dementyev seems driven by existential conflict. We may, therefore, posit that Conrad attempted to depict in *Heart of Darkness* the phenomena of the agent (that an individual may in some sense be merely a product of an underlying system, and simultaneously embody that system); abstraction (that established symbols — even symbols of power, such as brutality or wealth — dissipate when forced outside of their specific setting); and of ineffability (that some forces defy formal description).

'It is his extremity that I seemed to live through': the ineffable

As has often been noted, Marlow's narration frequently suggests an ineffable quality (too complex or abstract to be conveyed through direct description) to his recounted experiences, which may only be hinted at through his symbolic and multi-layered narrative. Just as there are ineffable qualities to both the subjective nature of the symptom and to how the outcomes of causal chains ultimately surpass their component elements, so *Heart of Darkness* attempts to indicate the ineffable through an illusion of narrative apophasis. This illusion occurs through the ways in which Conrad appears to only depict individual outcomes and instances, which indicate a deeper underlying cause that is itself beyond description. As with each aspect of Conrad's literary style examined in this chapter — symptom, causality and ineffability — the administrator characters are points at which all three elements (elements which exist in the narrative as stylistic themes that may be traced and investigated independently) unite within the narrative and are expressed through characterisation. Simmel, writing in 1903, argued that:

The deepest problems of modern life flow from the attempt of the individual to maintain the independence and individuality of his existence against the sovereign powers of society, against the weight of the historical heritage and the external culture and technique of life.<sup>348</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', in *The Blackwell City Reader*, ed. by Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson (Oxford and Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2002) (p. 1).

Simmel's case for their being a gap between individuals and supraindividual forms is echoed in Conrad's depiction of colonialism, and the effects it has on the individuals who both partake and are affected by it. The shared ethos of administrations is that information may be employed to create pre-determined outcomes. *Heart of Darkness* may represent a specific literary point of realisation — in the face of the stark contrast between the realities of the colonial project and its stated goal of proselytising civilised practices — that realising such a level of control on such a scale (by even the most 'august benevolence') was an illusion.

Conrad, in his 1917 author's note, asserts that he laid 'no claim to artistic purpose' and, writing about his stories, asserts that the 'only bond between them is that of the time they were written'.<sup>349</sup> This implies Marlow's narrative may be viewed as deliberately contrived to mirror Conrad's own series of disjointed experiences:

'... No, it is impossible; it is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence, – that which makes its truth, its meaning – its subtle and penetrating essence. It is impossible. We live, as we dream – alone ...'

The ineffable nature of what Conrad grapples with is acknowledged in his 22nd of December, 1902, letter to Edward Garnett, writing that 'your brave attempt to grapple with the foggiess of *HoD*, to explain what I myself tried to shape blindfold [...] has touched me profoundly'.<sup>350</sup> In this way, it could be said that Conrad effectively weaves existing but, as of the time of composition, unsystematically defined discourses into Marlow's narration to indicate a series of questions - such as those concerning the ability to control versus the ability to understand - which imperialism and nationalism failed to address, and which could not be engaged directly in Conrad's literary narrative.

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<sup>349</sup> Ian Watt, 'Impressionism and Symbolism in *Heart of Darkness*', in *Heart of Darkness*, ed. by Robert Kimbrough, 3 edn (London and New York: Norton Critical Edition, 1988) (p. 3).

<sup>350</sup> Letter republished in Robert F. Haught's *Joseph Conrad: Discovery in Design*, (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), p.35-40. Again, one may note the reference to dreams.

Famously, Conrad's recourse to the ineffable is criticised by Leavis. In *The Great Tradition*, Leavis takes issue with, for example, Conrad's allusions to an 'implacable force', or 'inscrutable intention', and asks whether these are, actually, 'an intrusion', and whether, as such, 'anything is to be added to the oppressive seriousness of the Congo by such sentences'?<sup>351</sup> Indeed, Leavis goes further, suggesting Conrad may, here, be 'convicted of borrowing the arts of the magazine-writer', 'intent on making a virtue out of not knowing what he means'; presumably referencing authors of popular fiction such as Poe who made frequent use of such adjectives as 'indescribable' and 'unspeakable' as descriptive terms.<sup>352</sup> Yet, it was not Conrad's goal to provide an empirical account of the exploitation of the Congo, and just as Leavis praises *Typhoon* for its contained and objective narrative style, it is possible to view the 'fogginess' of *Heart of Darkness* as a positive feature of the text, with its own specific intent and effect.<sup>353</sup> In fact, read in light of the way prior authors have used characterisation and character interaction both to reflect upon and analyse the emerging use of systematised knowledge — by the state, institutions, and individuals — through narrative, as has been traced in this thesis, and given the explicit emphasis in the novella upon how Europeans were not 'colonialists, their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect', it seems clear that Conrad did, in fact, know what he meant in his use of such a language of the 'ineffable'.<sup>354</sup> Leavis suggests that much of the power of the narrative of *Heart of Darkness* arises in response to a 'whole wide context of peculiarities' — that every scenario and vignette within the narrative references multiple other such instances within the narrative — generative of an atmosphere of 'objective correlates'.<sup>355</sup> Building on Leavis' point, these correlates are reflected in the representation of several 'objective' aspects of the narrative (the manager's white suit, or the Russian boy's patch work clothing, for example) as simultaneous correlates of subjective instances, open to multiple interpretations and experienced in multiple ways from multiple perspectives (the white suit and the patch work, for instance, convey

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<sup>351</sup> Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, p. 204.

<sup>352</sup> Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, p. 207.

<sup>353</sup> Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, p. 214. This problem is how best to distribute goods among the crew of a ship after a storm in which all the goods had been mixed, and no record of what belonged to who remained.

<sup>354</sup> Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, ed. by Robert Kimbrough, 3 edn (London and New York: Norton Critical Edition, 1988), p. 10. All quotes taken from this edition unless otherwise noted.

<sup>355</sup> Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, p. 201.

underlying economic and power relationships that are both symbolically and materially evident). Conrad incorporates within these ‘correlates’ the subjective and the ineffable. When Marlow tells Kurtz’s intended that the ‘last word he pronounced was – your name’, the reader knows full well that this is a lie. The reader is also made aware that out of feeling for the intended’s loss, social conventions, and the extent to which the intended — and, it is implied, the whole of European society at the time — was deluded as to Kurtz’s and the Company’s true nature, Marlow is incapable of telling the truth, and, indeed, even if he were to do so, Kurtz’s intended would not understand and quite probably disbelieve him.<sup>356</sup>

At the turn of the century, argues the cultural historian Carl Schorske, among others, political mass movements in Europe were ‘weakening the traditional liberal confidence in its own legacy of rationality, moral law and progress’.<sup>357</sup> Authors and thinkers during the cultural moments of Civic Humanism and the Enlightenment exploited literature as a medium ideally situated to analyse the interaction between new and established concepts. Within this literature, as we have seen, the administrator character provides a prism through which to view the text’s ideological hinterland, indicating the socio-political backdrop against which to read the text and to frame the debates with which it engages. Reading *Heart of Darkness* in this context implies that Conrad’s choice of a non-linear and impressionistic style functions as a direct response to the desire to dominate and systematise - a desire which appeared to run throughout the colonial project - and points to a loss of confidence in ‘rationality, moral law and progress’ as the true motivations underpinning it and purporting to give it coherence.

Marlow articulates this desire for ‘rationality, moral law and progress’, but does so using the language of symbolism and the ineffable. Trapped, awaiting supplies, at a Company trading post, Marlow states what he ‘really wanted was rivets’: ‘To get on with the work – to stop the hole’.<sup>358</sup> Rivets — physical, quantifiable units designed for a clear purpose with the capacity to provide a fixed point and to bind things together, even to overcome entropy and to ‘stop the hole’, as it were — seem, at this point in Marlow’s narrative, to represent the antithesis to the ineffable and to

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<sup>356</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 75.

<sup>357</sup> Carle Schorske, *Fin-De-Siecle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage 1986), p. 10.

<sup>358</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 30.

inefficiency. (After all, that which ‘saves us is efficiency – the devotion to efficiency’.)<sup>359</sup> But, as Marlow indicates, the rivets were in the wrong place (there ‘were cases of them down at the coast’, and one ‘kicked a loose rivet at every second step in that station yard on the hillside’), to such an extent that rivets had even ‘rolled into the grove of death’.<sup>360</sup> If it is fair to equate Marlow’s fetish for rivets with the desire for ‘fixed points’ of rationality, moral law and progress, then it is fair to suggest that the image of rivets being rendered useless and devoid of function indicates how the very standards and systems of the colonials (which the rivets seem to represent) are equally useless when situated within an alien environment, and that such customs are inevitably maladaptive. Just as a rivet is intended to be used within a specific infrastructure to perform its function, so, too, do laws, customs and ideals depend upon a multitude of social conventions to function. Whereas, then, Shakespeare may depict the debate over the pound of flesh in *The Merchant of Venice* as a conflict in which both sides share rules of engagement (and through the application of which mutually conclusive outcomes may be reached), that which is meaningful to Marlow is, in the context of the Congo, irrelevant to even his fellow Europeans.

Conrad’s emphasis upon inefficiency also reflects the extent to which the international public were kept in the dark concerning the realities of colonialism. As noted by Ewans, Leopold II took direct action to ensure that all knowledge concerning the realities of the Free State was restricted:

There were few visitors to the Congo and the pressures exerted on all who went to work for the Free State, as well as on other residents, meant that reliable information about what was going on there was slow to emerge. Free State employees all had to sign strict undertakings of secrecy, which their conditions of employment made it almost impossible for them to break. Were they to do so, the State would have no difficulty in making their lives unbearable, by denying them their commissions, withholding their pay, restricting their movements and preventing their

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<sup>359</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 10.

<sup>360</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 30.

obtaining employment when they eventually returned to Belgium.

Other residents too, if only in view of their isolation, were vulnerable to pressure.<sup>361</sup>

Even Kurtz's manuscript, his report for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs, written before 'his nerves went wrong', appears to reflect historical documents in circulation regarding the management of colonies.<sup>362</sup> Kurtz is described as having written in the report that by using 'the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbound'. Many similar sentiments, such as the claim that India 'if thus raised to the same condition as Java, would form the grandest empire it has ever yet entered into the heart of man to conceive', were expressed by James Money, the author of *How to Manage a Colony*, with whom Leopold II corresponded before achieving his dream of acquiring foreign territory.<sup>363</sup>

Marlow, at the beginning of his narrated journey, encounters, in the city likened to a 'whited sepulchre' (which appears to be located in Belgium), the Company's 'great man himself' behind 'the door of Darkness'.<sup>364</sup> Marlow seems to be using these terms sardonically, as if to draw attention to the dichotomy between the quiet banality of the nominal head of the Administration, and the brutal exploitation the Congo has suffered under the influence of that Administration. The 'great man' is, in actuality, no more to Marlow than 'an impression of pale plumpness in a frock coat'.<sup>365</sup> This character is effectively voiceless (he 'murmured vaguely'), with his only *personal* impact upon Marlow being an attempt to pre-emptively silence him: '...I undertook amongst other things not to disclose any trade secrets. Well I'm not going to.'<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>361</sup> Martin Ewans, *European Atrocity, African Catastrophe: Leopold II, the Congo Free State and Its Aftermath* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2002), p. 210.

<sup>362</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 50.

<sup>363</sup> James W. B. Money, *Java; or, How to Manage a Colony. Showing a Practical Solution to the Questions Now Affecting British India* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1861), p. 310.

<sup>364</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 14.

<sup>365</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 14.

<sup>366</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 14.



In fact, there is contained within this encounter a microcosm of Marlow's whole account, in that it consists of Marlow's impressions, experiences, encounters and prejudices, yet is absent of any 'trade secrets' or any hard facts of how the Administration actually operates. Indeed, there is, by contrast to much late nineteenth-century realism or 'naturalism', a noticeable absence within the whole text of any statistical or formal in-depth accounts of the Company's logistics. This absence suggests, perhaps, that the root of the impact *Heart of Darkness* has lies precisely *within* the absence of exact details, which are left for the reader to surmise. Conrad's depiction of the accountant tending his books to the groans of the dying and the droning of flies is, in this sense, not just a depiction of cause and effect, but also a depiction of a formal system of accounting failing to acknowledge the truly important. Leavis, who found Conrad's use of the ineffable to be 'an intrusion', elsewhere praises Dickens, in *The Great Tradition*, for his depiction of 'certain key aspects of Victorian civilization [...which] suggested to him connections and significances he had never realised before', as exemplified in the use of Gradgrind's and Bounderby's characterisation to link the political exploitation of utilitarian ideals to individual examples of 'rugged individualism' in *Hard Times*.<sup>367</sup> However, when Conrad makes explicit use of the ineffable, so to speak, this paradox invites the reader to acknowledge the absence of discourse concerning how the use of systematised knowledge and power to exploit the Congo made every colonial morally culpable. Viewing the text in this way suggests that the Administration acts as point of reference which underlies the whole narrative, while no practical description of the Company's logistics is provided, rendering them opaque. The characterisation of the director may be viewed as an encapsulation of this broader literary technique. In this way, Marlow's narration indeed may be read as what Watt described as one of the 'new narrative elements ... [that] reflect ... the general ideological crisis of the nineteenth century'.<sup>368</sup> Indeed, the amanuensis (the frame narrator) at one point 'interjects' in order to declare how he 'listened on the watch for the sentence, for the word that would give me the clue to the faint uneasiness inspired by this narrative...'<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, p. 31.

<sup>368</sup> Watt, 'Impressionism and Symbolism in *Heart of Darkness*' (p. 311).

<sup>369</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 30.

In *Heart of Darkness*, the administrator characters are rendered down (in both descriptive and characteristic terms) to their most basic level, serving as conduits through which to view the corrupt nature of the colonial Administration. At the same time, these characters are further revealed as representing facets of a deeper failing apparent in modern institutions' tendency to use collective action for exploitative ends. As such, the administrator characters represent aspects of the essential components of this tendency: the willing blindness of its participants and their collective 'pitiless folly'. They do so as appropriate manifestations of their differing occupations and roles within the colonial project. These characters who hold an administrative function also constitute the points within the text where Conrad's depiction of different thematic ideas converge: his depiction of the symptom; the use of 'ineffable' language to indicate the presence or influence of forces unaccounted for by the prevailing narratives of his era; and the use of narrative to reflect historical causal sequences and forms of association. It is within the representation of the Company's administrators that these elements are revealed as manifesting within and through individuals — and, through interaction with Marlow, these motivations and justifications are explored and interrogated.

'Perhaps I had a little fever too': a symptomatic narration

A central argument of this chapter is that in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad constructs what I will call a *symptomatic* narrative — a narrative which is itself intended to be read as a collection of symptoms indicating some underlying (but unseen and perhaps 'unseeable') historical agent. This symptomatic approach may be read as extending through every aspect of the novella, from characterisation to Conrad's use of metaphor. Symptoms are subjective abnormalities in the status quo, observed or experienced indications of a change — the end point of a causal chain, the measure of which may only be gauged (at least initially) by the extent and the severity of the symptoms it renders. So, in the key example of this in *Heart of Darkness*, the symptoms of the sleeping sickness, referred to at several points in the novella, include delirium and incoherence, but they are, themselves, beyond what may be expressed or described in words. In this way, reading *Heart of Darkness* as a symptomatic text also entails a reading of the means by which Conrad depicts causal chains in general, and the increasing influence of comparatively new phenomena

(such as transnational economics, corporate entities and administrative bodies) within the text.

While a ‘symptom’ need not directly apply to a physiological state or within the context of disease, there is a strong historical context of physiological symptoms associated with colonialism which were, at the time of the writing of *Heart of Darkness*, poorly understood and which were generally referred to (even within the medical community) via a language of symbolism. During the late nineteenth century, the ‘colonial’s disease’, or ‘sleeping sickness’ (known from the 1900s onwards as Congo trypanosomiasis) changed from an illness which mostly infected small pockets of individuals to an epidemic affecting the length of the Congo. The cause of the sickness was unknown, but its spread coincided absolutely with the arrival of colonial forces, and with colonial activities. Similarly, I want to suggest, many elements within *Heart of Darkness* correlate with this epidemic. Not only do many descriptions of individuals — and especially Kurtz himself — strongly correlate with the symptoms of the colonial disease, Marlow’s account itself becomes increasingly impressionistic and non-linear in a way that might, arguably, be read as exhibiting such symptoms at the level of narrative voice and form itself. Indeed, Marlow makes frequent references to the dream-like quality of his experiences, going so far as to link these explicitly to a malarial or fever type infection (it is not suggested that Marlow described as specific disease, rather that Marlow drew upon a set of symptoms and cultural impressions): ‘...the dream-sensation that pervaded all my days at that time. Perhaps I had a little fever too’.<sup>370</sup> Marlow similarly references dreams by describing Kurtz’s delirious ramblings as ‘words heard in dreams, of phrases spoken in nightmares’, and says of his own journey: ‘I remained to dream the nightmare out to the end’.<sup>371</sup> Reading the novella in the context of this plague strongly suggests, therefore, that these aspects of the text could well have been read as references to the sleeping sickness at the time of its publication.

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<sup>370</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 43.

<sup>371</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, pp. 65, 69.

The trypanosomiasis epidemic began in the southern Congo, and spread north along the banks of the Congo — just as Conrad describes Kurtz's own journey.<sup>372</sup> Infection rates of sleeping sickness greatly increased in line with the amount of traffic on the Congo River, and the river traffic, in turn, increased as large numbers of the Congolese were compelled to travel the river as conscripted porters, steamboat crew members or as conscripts into King Leopold II's militia, the *Force Publique*. It appears, then, that as Conrad was writing before the disease was identified (and therefore was seen and experienced as more an unexplained 'phenomena' than an epidemic), he, too, was repeating a presumed causal relation between the *act* of colonialism and the disease's symptoms. Just as the sleeping sickness exists within the novella as a reoccurring, undefined and poorly understood phenomena, so too, then, does the administration of the Company appear. Indeed, the sickness and the Administration symbolically function within the narrative as different manifestations (symptoms, if you will) of the same malaise — colonialism.

A reading of *Heart of Darkness* which interprets the novella's symbolism as referencing the sleeping sickness, and the sickness as providing an over-arching metaphor for colonial power, is further supported by how the descriptions most indicative of the disease appear concurrently with images of administrative corruption. Congo trypanosomiasis is a parasitic disease akin to malaria, caused by protozoa (parasitic single-cell organisms) transmitted by the tsetse fly. Its colloquial name is a reference to the illness' symptoms. The 'sleeping sickness' begins innocuously, with similar symptoms to the common cold. As the disease progresses, the victim develops confusion, clumsiness, sleep disruption, cyclical fatigue, and mania, and as the disease worsens, the victim ultimately succumbs to delirium, coma, and death. The causative agent, the tsetse (or tsetzi) fly, remained unidentified until 1903 (by David Bruce), and effective drugs weren't developed until 1910.<sup>373</sup> Superstitions surrounding the disease attributed its origins to witchcraft, but the correlation between the arrival of Westerners and the activities of Leopold II's ABIR

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<sup>372</sup> It was also known as 'the colonial disease' both in Africa and in Europe. The sleeping sickness continued to travel up the Congo River, resulting in an epidemic in Uganda in 1901.

<sup>373</sup> Lyons M, "African sleeping sickness: an historical review", *International Journal of STD and AIDS* 1991, 2:20-25.

Congo Company could not have gone unnoticed.<sup>374</sup> Other monikers for the illness, apart from ‘colonial’s sickness’ and ‘sleeping sickness’ included ‘Congo sickness’ and ‘colonial sickness’. Just as the name ‘Congo sickness’ speaks to the connection between proximity to the river and the illness, the idea of it being the ‘*colonial* sickness’ — rather than the ‘*colonial’s* sickness’ — is noteworthy for suggesting the *act* of colonialism as itself in some way causal.

The consequences of the sleeping sickness are also interesting in terms of the response to its successful identification. In 1903, a team from the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine (LSTM) investigated sleeping sickness. Subsequently, the LSTM recommended that the Belgians instigate a response composed of ‘a score of administrative measures designed to regulate various African activities in order to control the incidence and spread of sleeping sickness’.<sup>375</sup> This speaks to the manner in which the colonial powers viewed the Congo — as something to be dominated through administration, and in which administration (including medical administration) functioned as an extension and continuation of military force.

The use of ‘administrative measures’ to ‘regulate’ and, through the act of regulation, to ‘control the incidence and spread of sleeping sickness’, suggests a Western colonial belief that insofar as it is possible for a phenomenon to be identified and systematised (even without full understanding), it could be the subject of administration, and thereby controlled. Foucault posited that it was at the end of the eighteenth century that ‘medical gestures, words, gazes took on a philosophical density that had formerly belonged only to mathematical thought’<sup>376</sup> — that the subjective character of an individual’s symptoms could be attributed a ‘mechanical’, ‘mathematical’ certainty when viewed as one among an epidemic. In effect, the disease is used as an excuse to collectivise the individual members and characteristics of a group (or ‘population’), and thus use statistical and empirical rationale to ‘smooth over’ their differences and amalgamate them into a group upon

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<sup>374</sup> Medicine News Online, "African sleeping sickness shrouded in superstition" by Martin Zoutane Daba (AFP) — Jun 10, 2012 - <http://medicinewsonline.com/18365/african-sleeping-sickness-shrouded-in-superstition-afp/>

<sup>375</sup> *Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies*, ed. by David Arnold (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 106

<sup>376</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, trans. by A. M. Sheridan (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 198.

which various ‘governmental’ measures could be enacted. Indeed, Conrad’s depiction of the use of medical discourse to facilitate cultural domination and further the Western assumption of superiority is echoed in Foucault’s analysis. Foucault perceived that medical diagnosis (given the level of biological understanding at the time) overreached itself inasmuch as no ‘measurable mechanics of the body can, in its physical or mathematical particularities, account for a pathological phenomenon’,<sup>377</sup> so, for example, Conrad’s ‘alienist’ doctor is presented as a practitioner of phrenology (and measured Marlow’s head, ‘the dimensions back and front and every way, taking notes carefully’).<sup>378</sup> Here, the doctor’s trust in phrenology may well be a direct comment on the cultural uses of phrenology by the Belgian colonial authorities. King Leopold I appointed Dr Andrew Combe, a ‘pioneer’ of phrenology, his royal physician in 1836, although Combe’s leaving the post shortly after may suggest this role was created more for the sake of appearances.<sup>379</sup> In Africa, phrenology was employed by the Belgian colonials as a means to arbitrate the population, one outcome of which was the ‘discovery’ of an ethnic difference between the Hutus and Tutsis of Rwanda, which resulted in the eventual introduction of racial identification cards.<sup>380</sup>

This historical context, in which it was believed systematisation (even without understanding) was all that was required for control, appears to speak to the symbolic and moral ambiguity at the centre of *Heart of Darkness*. Indeed, it might be suggested that Conrad was precisely writing against this implicit ideological and political backdrop of systemic attempts to control without understanding, and was therefore attempting to depict a scenario which could not be dismissed with the presumption that ‘administrative measures designed to regulate’ could ‘control the incidence and spread’ of the poorly misunderstood barriers to imperial expansion.

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<sup>377</sup> Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, p. 13.

<sup>378</sup> Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic*, p. 15.

<sup>379</sup> Although no historical records directly support this interpretation, having a pioneer of phrenology attend to a nation’s king may have been arranged to suggest to contemporaries the physician issuing a ‘gold stamp’ of racial superiority to the nation.

<sup>380</sup> Alain Destexhe, *Rwanda and Genocide in the 20th Century*. trans. by Alison Marschner (London: Pluto Press, 1995), p. 31. See also Timothy Longman, ‘Identity Cards, Ethnic Self-Perception, and Genocide in Rwanda’, in *Documenting Individual Identity: The Development of State Practices in the Modern World*, ed. by Jane Caplan and John C. Torpey (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 345-58.

(This would provide one rather different reading, then, of the language of ‘ineffability’ criticised by Leavis and others in the novella.) Just as the cause of Kurtz’s apparent illness, and the multiple victims in the ‘grove of death’, appear to be overt references to the sleeping sickness (without ever being *systematically* described or identified as such), so the administration itself is never *systematically* described. Indeed, within *Heart of Darkness*, to be a part of the administration is associated with its own set of symptoms, while, at the same time, the symptoms of colonialism also affect the Congo itself, manifesting in, for example, the grove of death, Kurtz’s madness, and, of course, most famously, ‘The horror! The horror!’ of Kurtz’s last words.

In this way, the administration functions as an overarching metaphor for the disease, while the disease functions, in turn, as a metaphor for both the affliction of exploitation in the Congo and the European lust for power. Both the apparent illness and social corruption pervade the events depicted as manifestations of a shared culpable influence, but remain inexplicably undefined, and therefore outside the remit of institutional, ‘administrative measures designed to regulate’. Kurtz, as perceived by ‘western eyes’, may be seen as a victim of the illness (both trypanosomiasis and colonialism itself), whose condition appears to be a physical manifestation of internal corruption — as if Kurtz himself is being consumed by the ‘sickness’ of the colonial project. Of course, Conrad is never overt in identifying Kurtz’s infection with the sleeping sickness (it is not named), although this was, perhaps, as much as anything due to the fact that the sickness had yet to be medically codified *as* a disease, and its symptoms and causal agent (the tsetse fly and parasitic infestation) yet to be defined. If Conrad’s choice of an undefined and poorly understood malady was therefore deliberate, designed to enhance the sense of a confused attempt to impose order upon a misunderstood phenomenon, it may also be argued that Conrad intended by its use to reflect deeper problems with the colonial project.

My central claim is, then, that, throughout *Heart of Darkness*, the administrator characters — the characters through which, the text represents contemporary concerns regarding institutions and socio-economic infrastructure, and through which the author engages with the European literary tradition of characterising the

same — are (possibly for the first time) themselves portrayed in a manner *akin to a symptom*. That is to say, Conrad depicts his individual administrator characters, I want to argue, as symptoms *of* some wider underlying and poorly understood phenomena, such as institutional corruption, the collective force of an abstraction, or the desire to conquer the unknown rather than understand it.

The seeds of this individual realisation of systemic corruption are anticipated by Marlow's conversation with the alienist doctor:

‘Ever any madness in your family? [...] I have a little theory which you Messieurs who go out there must help me to prove. This is my share in the advantages my country shall reap from the possession of such a magnificent dependency. The mere wealth I leave to others.’<sup>381</sup>

Again, it is unclear here as to whether the doctor's ‘theory’ refers to a disease (of either pathogenic, a deficiency, hereditary or physiological causes) or simply to the nature of the colonial enterprise. The phrasing of his question, however, indicates that it pertains to madness. Thus, the doctor's use of the collective term ‘Messieurs’ suggests it is the colonial activities that are the potential source of some form of personal, institutional or even systemic ‘devolution’, foreshadowing Marlow's experiences.

Conrad's use of symbolism and metaphor is often presented in terms of the ‘symptomatic’. Marlow's encounter with the knitting ladies, the doctor and the man-of-war are all presented as having a symbolic significance which Marlow himself indicates and attempts to identify. As such, these are examples of Conrad's ‘compounding’ symbolism — layering individually symbolic instances upon one another — until it is as if the reader has been presented with enough evidence to draw conclusions as to a unified ‘transcendental signified’, or ‘cause’ for the metaphors. In this way, Conrad's use of symbolism directly mirrors a series of symptoms from which the reader is invited to draw a diagnosis. The first of the Company's functionaries that Marlow encounters, the knitting ladies, appear to

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<sup>381</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 15.



symbolically reference the Norns (the mythic Viking weavers of fate), as they ‘seemed to know all [...] about me [...] which] seemed uncanny and fateful’.<sup>382</sup> These ‘Norns’ are referenced again much later within the text, in book three, as ‘a most improper person to be sitting at the other end of such an affair’, unifying the final section and reiterating the sense that the events described are united by more than simply Marlow’s personal experience, via the influence of the Administration.<sup>383</sup> Leaving the Chairman’s office, Marlow is met by a secretary (‘with an air of taking an immense part in all my sorrows’) who has ‘some clerk’ lead Marlow to the doctor.<sup>384</sup> Marlow notes that ‘there must have been clerks in the business’, but this fact, the nature of their activity, their level of complicity or even the extent of their awareness of the true nature of the Company is less important to Marlow than his impression that ‘the house was still as a house in a city of the dead’; a fact conveyed through his omission of these details from his narrative.<sup>385</sup>

The doctor is described as an ‘alienist’ and a philologist, and as attempting to record the mental impact of serving in the Congo upon the Company’s agents. Despite this goal, the doctor is depicted as lacking even a base level of empathy, and is apparently blind to the ‘mental changes’ his questions might provoke within those he quizzes, or, indeed, the effects of telling his ‘subject’ how ‘the mental changes’ will affect the validity of any conclusions reached through interacting with those under his ‘observation’.<sup>386</sup> Marlow’s assertion in conversation with the doctor is that he, Marlow, is not ‘typical’ (‘if I were I wouldn’t be talking like this with you’) is dismissed with the advice to avoid ‘irritation more than the sun’.<sup>387</sup> This suggestion reveals the extent to which the doctor, who presumes to be able to gauge the effect of acting for the Company upon any given individual, is effectively blind to the realities Marlow will encounter. These initial encounters with the agents of the Administration indicate to the reader that the constituent members of the Administration are wilfully blind to its inherently exploitative nature, in the same

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<sup>382</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 14.

<sup>383</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 64.

<sup>384</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 14.

<sup>385</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 14.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid*, p.76

<sup>387</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 15.

manner as is Marlow's aunt who sees Marlow, as an new employee of the Administration, as 'an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle'.<sup>388</sup> This wilful ignorance combines with the narrative style in which the primary means by which the reader will experience the influence of the Administration is via Marlow's impressions, rather than via any explicit description of its activities or edicts. These allusions to institutional blindness occur throughout the novella, and continue to expand in their implications to incorporate even those entities presented as beyond the remit of the Company. Such is the case, for example, with the French man-of-war blindly 'firing into a continent'.<sup>389</sup> Marlow's sense that 'there was a touch of insanity in the proceeding' is jarringly paired with the banal motive for this encounter, 'her [the man-of-war's] letters', which Marlow's ship had been charged with delivering. These letters, and the statement (which appears in the text in parentheses) 'the men in that lonely ship were dying of fever', suggests that the Administration has itself an infectious quality, or that the man-of-war is a symptom of a common illness the Company itself is manifesting through its agents.<sup>390</sup>

The unifying influence of the first person account given by Marlow provides the reader with the sense of a common cause behind the 'high and just proceedings', which Marlow himself encourages when he compares this influence to 'a flabby pretending weak eyed devil of a rapacious and pitiless folly', and emphasises a common lack of rationality in the scenarios he encounters ('a vast, artificial hole somebody had been digging [...] the purpose of which I found impossible to divine').<sup>391</sup> This sense of 'pitiless folly' is linked, in Marlow's mind, with an event 'several months later and a thousand miles farther'. This allusion, at first sight, appears to be directed towards Kurtz, but the inclusion of a reference to distance ('a thousand miles farther') suggests that Marlow is, in fact, referring to his encounter with Kurtz's intended, and his own apologetics for the colonial project. If the reader is intended to perceive the Company as the primary manifestation of a deeper institutional malaise, here we see the resultant complicity that results from a failure to actively oppose it. Despite this impression being grounded in the style of

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<sup>388</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 15.

<sup>389</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 17.

<sup>390</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 17.

<sup>391</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 17.

Marlow's narration, the *clearest* expression of this phenomenon remains the Company, and in order for this collective impression of the Company to form, it is in turn the Company's agents who provide an array of various forms or manifestations of this 'pitiless folly'.

Of course, the 'pitiless folly' of the exploitation of the Congo is also depicted via its direct influence upon the environment and its native inhabitants, and it continues to be Marlow's narration which merges these atrocities into one amorphous activity — again with a presumed common cause. Marlow's description of the 'grove of death', which he visits immediately before meeting the chief accountant for the first time, is of the afflicted occupants appearing as 'black shadows of disease and starvation lying confusedly in the greenish gloom'. Marlow describes one sufferer who:

... had tied a bit of white worsted round his neck — Why? Where did he get it. Was it a badge — an ornament — a charm — a propitiatory act? Was there any idea at all connected with it. It looked startling round his black neck this bit of white thread from beyond the seas.<sup>392</sup>

Although, as previously stated, the causative agent and vector were not identified until 1903, the first Western account of the illness to which this appears to refer was published in 1803 (by Thomas Winterbottom), and the symptoms of sleeping sickness were well known, if poorly understood, within the Congo. The physical description of the afflicted former workers matches symptoms displayed by sufferers of sleeping sickness, and, if it is the case that the thread were 'worsted', as Marlow recounts, this item adds to the symbolic impression that the young man is being choked by colonial culture. As far as the young man's situation is concerned, infection by the sleeping sickness, combined with failing health due to overwork and cultural invasion, are, in effect, composite manifestations of the same processes behind Marlow's own situation.

Reading the novella with consideration to the history of Congo trypanosomiasis, it seems, then, clear that Conrad intended his depictions of Kurtz's sickness to match the symptoms of an ailment akin to sleeping sickness (*a* colonial disease, rather than *the* colonial disease), which in turn appears to have been intended as an analogy for

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<sup>392</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 21.

the corruption of the colonial project (rather than, for example, a deliberate attempt to depict a specific pathology). The increasingly ‘diffuse’ nature of Marlow’s descriptions of Kurtz’s mental state, do indeed conform to the progressive nature of the mental deterioration caused by Congo trypanosomiasis. The progressive mental deterioration of the actual disease trypanosomiasis, which leads to coma and death, appears to be melded, however, with what is also an actual physical dissipation of self, the last physical description of Kurtz being ‘a vision of greyness without form filled with physical pain and a careless contempt for the evanescence of all things – even of pain itself’.<sup>393</sup> Again, this is starkly reminiscent of the description of the company director — the ‘impression of pale plumpness in a frock-coat’ which emerged from behind ‘a heavy writing-desk’.<sup>394</sup> Just as the company director has no real identity within Marlow’s narrative outside of the Company itself (and is thus a being effectively subsumed into its role), so too does Kurtz’s true identity remain contentious and unclear throughout the remainder of the narrative. In fact, every character Marlow talks to about Kurtz gives a contradictory impression of him.<sup>395</sup>

Conrad strongly implies that Kurtz was seen by the tribe as a supernatural entity: ‘unspeakable rites, which – as far as I reluctantly gathered from what I heard at various times – were offered up to him’.<sup>396</sup> This is foreshadowed early in Marlow’s account in his description of his predecessor, the Dane Fresleven, who was stabbed and killed by a native. Marlow was able to visit Fresleven’s remains, as the ‘supernatural being had not been touched’.<sup>397</sup> This anecdote serves to foreshadow the revelation of the natives’ idolatry of Kurtz, and it heightens the reader’s awareness of how Marlow is interpreting the events *and* imposing his own narrative to explain them. It is Marlow’s interpretation that the natives view the colonisers as gods — it is equally plausible that the natives feared corruption. Similarly, with Kurtz, it could be that the natives were attempting to appease Kurtz, or even guard against his

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<sup>393</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 69.

<sup>394</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 14.

<sup>395</sup> There are parallels in the manner of Kurtz’s depiction and Machiavelli and More’s administrators. Whereas Machiavelli and More used references to historical individuals to add the weight of anecdote to their wider claims, Conrad uses characterisation to hint at an ineffable quality to the effects of colonialism – a quality inexpressible in words – which appears to be *due* to the stifling and blind administration and its effects on human relationships and human experience.

<sup>396</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 50.

<sup>397</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 13.

tyranny. Marlow tells of how, when leaving to ferry Kurtz away from his camp, ‘three men plastered with bright red earth from head to foot strutted to and fro restlessly’. Again, Marlow imposes his own symbolic context to explain the events, describing the scene as ‘some satanic litany’, envisioning the natives as perceiving the ferry as a ‘fierce river-demon’.<sup>398</sup> But in fact it was common practice for natives to plaster a red clay mixed to a paste with oil over the body to protect against tsetse fly, a tradition of which Marlow was, necessarily, ignorant. He is, we might speculate, therefore unable to separate pragmatism from superstition.<sup>399</sup> Indeed, Conrad makes it clear to the reader that this inability of Marlow and the colonials — the failure to differentiate between superstitious and efficacious practices — extends to the practices of the colonials themselves. Conrad appears unwavering in this representation, as if to implicate *himself*, as author, equally in this judgment — and by implication, the reader and the colonial project as a whole.

The sources of evidence for what Kurtz is like in action, which Marlow takes as far more accurate than the accounts given by the Company agents, are the artefacts which Kurtz has left behind: the heads on poles, the commissioned report, the painting of the blindfolded lady. These artefacts are interpreted by Marlow as revealing truths about the practical effects of colonialism and state-funded capitalist exploitation which resonate with Marlow’s own experiences (regardless of Kurtz’s intentions in creating them). The encounters in which Marlow and Kurtz converse lead Marlow to believe Kurtz is not ‘a lunatic’, and that ‘his intelligence was perfectly clear – concentrated [...] his soul was mad.’ Kurtz’s final words, ‘the horror’, for Marlow ‘had a candour [...] a vibrating note of revolt in its whisper, it had the appalling face of a glimpsed truth’, ‘thrown to me from a soul as translucently pure as a cliff of crystal’.<sup>400</sup> This clarity is an evidential clarity, in stark contrast to the presumed knowledge that the Company’s agents purport to possess regarding both the Company and Kurtz himself. The accountant for whom Kurtz is ‘satisfactory’ and the manager for whom Kurtz is first ‘a visionary’ and later ‘unsound’, both lack Marlow’s willingness to listen to Kurtz on his own terms.

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<sup>398</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 66.

<sup>399</sup> For more on these practices see: Patrick Francis D’Arcy, *Labratory of the Nile: A History of the Wellcome Tropical Research Laboratories* (Binghamton: Pharmaceutical Heritage Editions, 1999), p. 201.

<sup>400</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, pp. 69, 70.

However, the final judge of the realities of Kurtz's activities, the state of his mind, or the cause of Kurtz's physical decline, is the reader. Conrad's apparent intention is to provide the reader with a second-hand experience of a fictional encounter with an individual who embodied the logical conclusion of the 'criminality of inefficiency and pure selfishness when tackling the civilizing work in Africa'.<sup>401</sup> This desire to express an 'African nightmare feeling'<sup>402</sup> strongly suggests that Kurtz is merely the human face of the intended larger focus of the narrative. Indeed, a reading of the novella which emphasises the role of administrator characters reveals the extent to which the sleeping sickness and the Company are employed in ways which directly complement Conrad's use of administrator characters, and highlights how these elements merge within Kurtz's depiction.

'A most improper person to be sitting at the end of such an affair': causal chains

The term 'causal chain' is used to describe a sequence in which each event is caused by its predecessor and influences its successor accordingly. In a very real sense, therefore, conventional literary plots conform to this description in their use of forms. Yet, in *Heart of Darkness*, Conrad uses narrative to indicate the past and present influences 'upon' the event directly addressed within the novella. It is certainly the case that Conrad uses Marlow's narration to reference historically real institutional structures and contemporary discourses of power from an experiential and individualised perspective. Jameson has described realism as uniting the 'experience of daily life with a properly cognitive mapping, or well-nigh "scientific" perspective', and thus reads Conrad's literature as 'a strategic fault line in the emergence of contemporary narrative, a place from which the structure of twentieth-century literature and cultural *institutions* becomes visible' and simultaneously 'juxtaposed'.<sup>403</sup>

In 1876, Leopold II of Belgium engineered the formation of the International Association for the Suppression of Slavery and the Opening Up of Central Africa

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<sup>401</sup> Extracts from Correspondence, letter to Mr Blackwood, 13th December 1893, Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 201.

<sup>402</sup> Extracts from Correspondence, letter to Mr Blackwood, 8th February 1899, Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 207.

<sup>403</sup> Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2002), pp. 90, 194.

with its stated aim (as proclaimed at the international conference in Brussels) being ‘[t]o open to civilization the only area of our globe to which it has not yet penetrated, to pierce the gloom which hangs over entire races [...] a Crusade worthy of this century of progress’.<sup>404</sup> What followed was a genocidal exploitation of the Congo’s resources. In 1885, the Congo Free State was ratified as the personal property of Leopold II by the 14-nation Berlin Conference convened by Bismarck to resolve the Congo question. By the 1900s, any moral pretensions had been superseded by a colonial agenda manifestly based on financial self-interest. In *Heart of Darkness*, Jameson located an awareness of wider economic factors in ‘Conrad’s unquestionable and acute sense of the nature and dynamics of imperialist penetration’, and argues that the ‘historical and economic type is “managed” in the text itself’.<sup>405</sup> Jameson suggests that Conrad was aware of how literary institutions of ‘narrative transmission’ had, by the turn of the century, been treated as yet another resource to be broken into constituent parts and reordered to further progress, and that Conrad used narrative to ‘invert’ Leopold II’s carefully crafted and distancing narratives surrounding the colonial activities, re-implicating Leopold II through characterisation.

Conrad uses the very language of his administrator characters to echo the forms of cultural and material associations behind colonisation. The New York Methodist newspaper, the *Christian Advocate*, cited Henry Morton Stanley’s journey as an example to justify the abolition of slavery, yet the paper’s mild anti-slavery stance

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<sup>404</sup> Cite: Neal Ascherson, *The King Incorporated: Leopold II in the Age of Trusts* 1963, p.94, in: Ian Watt, *Conrad in the nineteenth century*, University of California Press, 1979, P.139. Hobson describes the enterprise as a symptom of Aponoia: ‘So Leopold, King of the Belgians, has claimed for his government of the Congo— “Our only programme is that of the moral and material regeneration of the country.” It is difficult to set any limit upon the capacity of men to deceive themselves as to the relative strength and worth of the motives which affect them: politicians, in particular, acquire so strong a habit of setting their projects in the most favourable light [...] As for the public, it is only natural that it should be deceived [...] patriotism appeals to the general lust of power [...] Christianity becomes “imperialist” to the Archbishop of Canterbury, a “going out to all the world to preach the gospel”; trade becomes “imperialist” in the eyes of merchants seeking a world market.’ John A Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, Moral and Sentimental Factors, Cosmo Classics, 2006, p.198 — published in the same year as *Heart of Darkness*. The themes and implied critique of corrupt capitalism within both texts echo each other, and Hobson, a capitalist reformer rather than a communist, influenced social theory well into the twentieth century, as evidenced by John Maynard Keynes’s praise for it in his *General Theory of Interest, Employment and Money*.

<sup>405</sup> Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, p. 203.

(under the editorship of Abel Stevens) belies the hypocrisy and moral equivocation at the centre of its argument. The article asserted that while ‘no flag be excluded except the slaver’s flag’ over the Congo, the ‘people on its banks’ *needed* a missionary society to ‘Christianize and civilize’ them — indeed it was a ‘duty’. This very word is used by Kurtz himself in reference to his writing for newspapers: ‘for the furthering of my ideas. It’s a duty’.<sup>406</sup> Here is truly an example in which the Congo serves (to borrow Achebe’s phrasing) as a ‘backdrop’ for Western preoccupations, revealing a cognitive dissonance — a case of ‘double think’ — in even the most well-intentioned advocates of the colonial project.<sup>407</sup> In a footnote, Stanley, the explorer credited not only with finding Dr Livingstone but also mapping much of the Congo on behalf of King Leopold II, describes how the expedition ‘had given up all hopes of hearing from civilisation’.<sup>408</sup> This remark is unqualified, and despite describing the people he encountered as having a system of exchange (‘Bribes were offered to us three times by Manyema chiefs to assist them in destroying their neighbours’), and inter-cultural awareness (‘Our refusal of ivory and slaves appeared to surprise the chiefs, and they expressed the opinion that we white men were not as good as the Arabs’), Stanley describes them (without irony) as being expansionist, ignorant, and colonial. Notably, Stanley does so in a manner which fails to recognise the existence of an established infrastructure of implicit agreements and trade between cultures, ‘for – though it was true we did not rob them of their wives, ravish and steal their daughters, enslave their sons, or despoil them of a single article – the Arabs would have assisted them.’<sup>409</sup>

Stanley’s approach is more or less identical to that of Marlow’s in book two, where Marlow asserts that: ‘[o]ne really does not know whether to pity or to despise the native of Manyema. Many are amiable enough to deserve good and kind treatment, but others are hardly human.’<sup>410</sup> Marlow may thus be read as a voice from his time, reflecting the conflicted imperial discourse of his contemporaries. Conrad’s

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<sup>406</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 68.

<sup>407</sup> For more on the representation of Africa within anti-slavery discourse see Frank Luther Mott, *A History of American Magazines 1850-1865*, Vol.2, Oxford University Press, 1938, p.67.

<sup>408</sup> Henry Morton Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent* (Toronto: Courier Dover Publications, 1988), p. 8.

<sup>409</sup> Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, p. 60.

<sup>410</sup> Stanley, *Through the Dark Continent*, p. 68.



depiction of a conflicted and inconstant central narrator, who never fully condemns the abuses he sees around him, appears, when contrasted with Stanley's accounts, less a purely artistic choice on Conrad's part and more a matter of realism the requirement to accurately depict the contradictory nature of the accounts given by colonials themselves. Conrad's treatment of the administrators of the colonial project (of which Stanley himself was exemplary), and the characters through which their ideologies are, to a degree, personified, may therefore be respected as equally 'realist' in this respect: Conrad has his characters repeat the very phrases and terms of the sympathisers of colonialism and the colonial instigators themselves to emphasise the causal associations between the propaganda in Europe and atrocity in Africa.

Marlow's conflicted, layered narration provides this historical comment without surrendering the text's deeper themes to mere analogy. The historical backdrop of the novella appears to act as an exposition for the impressionistic and chronologically-confused narration, anchoring the potentially confusing style with real historical foundations. Without knowledge of Leopold II's biography, for example, the exact nature of the activities of Kurtz and the Company are, literally, obscene — in the sense that their activities are never clearly described, and only alluded to. Leopold II reigned as king of Belgium from 1865 until his death in 1909. A constitutional monarch, Leopold II relied upon popular support via a democratic government and was widely regarded as being a progressive influence within Belgium. In 1873, for example, Leopold II supported the Belgium workers' right to strike, declaring in a speech that:

The new administration will exercise the utmost economy in the use of governmental funds, at the same time taking great care not to disrupt the functioning of established public services. It will study the best way to make use of our increasing financial resources; it will extend public works programmes but at the same time will seek means to reduce taxes on basic food stuffs.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Barabara Emerson, *Leopold II of the Belgians: King of Colonialism* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), p. 131. Note here the use of the term 'administration' as a blanket term alluding to ambitions for the

Leopold II, infuriated by the lack of power that came with his throne, sought to establish himself a colonial ruler. In 1876, Leopold II adopted the language of the philanthropist and began networking in London, until he identified the basin of the Congo River as a territory which no European powers had intentions to occupy. In September 1876, Leopold II convened a ‘geographical conference’ in Brussels, attended by European dignitaries. Leopold II described the goal of the conference ‘to pierce the darkness which hangs over entire peoples’ via the establishment of the ‘location of routes [...] of hospitable, scientific, and pacification bases’.<sup>412</sup> The language, a master class in euphemism, cast the establishment of a network of fortifications reminiscent of the Roman Empire’s fort system (‘Limes’) as rest stops for visiting missionaries, centres for research, and a means to ‘pacify’ the indigenous population. Leopold II further implied the forts would contain scientists, anthropologists and artisans, and would be stocked with the tools of exposition, such as maps and tools. In effect, Leopold II sold this enterprise as the natural extension of Livingstone’s exposition; he even had Pyotr Semenov, a Russian geographer, chair the conference. Naturally, the underlying context of empire, centralised state rule, and handpicked attendees resulted in the conference concluding that activities such as exploration, trade, and cultural exchange could not be expected to occur spontaneously. Subsequently, an administrative body, the International African Association, was founded, to be located in Brussels and chaired by Leopold II.<sup>413</sup> Under the cover of philanthropy and exploration, Leopold II employed explorers, among them H. M. Stanley, to purchase as much land as possible from the indigenous population, and thus establish Leopold II as the private owner of a private empire. This process was sold to the American government as an imitation of the treaties established with Native Americans in the 1600s, and (after extensive lobbying) the United States Secretary of State recognised King Leopold II’s claim to the Congo via the establishment of the titular free state Stanley referred to in the title

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administration’s achievements, which may not have been realistically achievable — in the manner first suggested as being done in the writing of Machiavelli and More.

<sup>412</sup> Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost* (London: Pan Books, 2012), p. 45.

<sup>413</sup> Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost*, p. 45.

of his book: *The Congo and the founding of its free state: a story of work and exploration*.<sup>414</sup>

In 1884, Leopold II invited international lawyer Travers Twiss to draw up the ‘constitution’ of the Congo Free State, thereby implicitly receiving legal approval for the practice of buying land from local tribal leaders.<sup>415</sup> Leopold II came into personal possession of the Congo Free State (through internationally recognised decree by the Belgium parliament) from 1885 to 1908. Unlike the British, French and Spanish colonies, the Free State was Leopold II’s personal property. To maximise revenue, Leopold II implemented slave labour and a quota system. Leopold II’s employees did, indeed, employ a system of forts and blocks. Land blocks were leased (from interlocking directorates) by concession companies and shareholders, with fifty per cent of the shares returned to the Belgium state, and, through the state, Leopold II himself — the Belgium state effectively bestowing the patina of democratic approval over Leopold II’s activities. This system was enforced by the founding, in 1888, of the paramilitary *Force Publique*, Leopold II’s private militia, comprised of recruited Congolese and led by Belgian nationals. The militia put down local uprisings, ‘enforced’ the land contracts made with local chiefs, and enforced the system of command labour. Each post held around twenty recruited soldiers (usually Congolese natives) and one or two European officers. The activities of this force were overseen by 14 administrative districts covering the Congo Basin. Just as Leopold II and his employees used the language of euphemism to initiate this venture, they employed the trappings of administration as a ‘system of euphemism’. By maintaining the pretence of consent and contract law, and the subsequent pretence of legal enforcement of these contracts, the *Force Publique* enslaved the local population.<sup>416</sup> Further, the use of administrative measures, and the illusion of justice, authority, impartiality and the abnegation of personal responsibility seems to have given the individual colonials the personal licence to employ individual members of the local population, who, in turn, were recruited in the subjugation of the entire region.

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<sup>414</sup> Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, p. 81.

<sup>415</sup> Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, p. 71.

<sup>416</sup> Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, p. 124.

Conrad's original plan for *Heart of Darkness*, as described in correspondence with his editor Blackwood, was to address the 'criminality and inefficiency and pure selfishness when tackling the civilising work in Africa'.<sup>417</sup> This prognosis has been interpreted by Levenson as an indication that *Heart of Darkness* was intended to be a much shorter work, possibly only consisting of book one, focused upon the agents of the Company and the wastefulness of their Administration.<sup>418</sup> However, the novella's later focus upon Kurtz, the striking comparisons between Kurtz 'the extremist' and Leopold II 'the civiliser', and the emphasis placed in the novella's later sections upon the problematic relationship between Kurtz and the Company, suggests that Conrad's initial readership would have viewed Kurtz, the agents of the Administration, and the Company itself as expressions of historical realities with different emphasises but a shared root cause. Read as such, it appears that Conrad deliberately inverted the dynamic between Leopold II and the Congo (by placing Kurtz deep in the jungle and the 'pale impression' of the Company director in a European office), with each of the agents of the Company presented as hollow vessels through which the inefficiency and selfishness of the Administration and its 'real world' parallels were represented.<sup>419</sup> Leopold II was effectively two rulers, or, at least, presented his rule entirely differently in accordance with the institutional restrictions on his activities. Leopold II was at once the progressive Belgian constitutional monarch and the tyrannical robber baron of the Free State – a possible parallel to the ways in which Kurtz is described as both an 'exceptional man' and one who had 'nothing on earth to prevent him from killing whoever he jolly well pleased'.<sup>420</sup> Leopold II's deliberate use of financial rewards to encourage others to engage in cruelty and exploitation is captured within the narrative of *Heart of Darkness*. By making the narration unreliable and subjective, the reader's interpretation gains the quality of an experience, and thus the reader is allowed to uncover the barbaric truth behind the Company's layers of administration.

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<sup>417</sup> Letter to Mr Blackwood, 31 December 1898, in Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 201.

<sup>418</sup> *Heart of Darkness: Complete, Authoritative Text with Biographical, Historical and Cultural Contexts, Critical History, and Essays from Contemporary Critical Perspectives*, ed. by Ross C. Murfin, 3 edn (Boston: Bedford-St.Martins, 2011), p. 12.

<sup>419</sup> A reading supported by how the narrative serves equally well when imagined 'backwards' (with Marlow journeying out of the Congo to encounter the 'great man') and the fact that the novella's latter half so closely echoes the symbolism and episodic nature of the first half, only in 'reverse'.

<sup>420</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, pp. 25, 56.

Despite causal chains having the ability to be characterised so precisely, and (in theory) identified to exacting position, there remains an inherent ambiguity to the causal chain. In every causal chain there is the possibility that one, or multiple, causes may be overlooked or unaccounted for. Further, while the composite aspects of a causal chain may be identifiable, the composite outcome almost always gains a subjective and experiential quality which remains undeniably a point in the causal chain, as in how the vibration of air may result in music. Conrad's characterisation of administrator figures within *Heart of Darkness* serve to tie the narrative explorations of causality, the symptomatic, and the ineffable together, allowing Marlow to interact with aspects of each theme simultaneously. Marlow describes the Company's chief accountant as 'a sort of vision' in 'starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, snowy trousers, a clean necktie, and varnished boots'. He is a 'white man' in both senses of the term, and 'in the great demoralisation of the land he kept up his appearance'. This allusion to a surface appearance of purity (which depends upon the work of a Congolese woman, whom he 'taught') suggests the chief accountant embodies the superficial purity of the quest for profit as revealed through the 'apple pie' records he keeps.<sup>421</sup> It is the accountant who first tells Marlow about Kurtz, who 'will be somebody in the Administration before long'.<sup>422</sup> Conrad's punctuation links the accountant's description of Kurtz with the Administration, and both the Administration and Kurtz with a trench outside the office, which is filled with dying Congolese. Conrad achieves this link with his pointed use of the semi-colon, which (in this case literally) indicates the subject matter's interdependence:

'In the steady buzz of flies the homeward bound agent was lying flushed and insensible, the other bent over his books was making correct entries of perfectly correct transitions; and fifty feet below the doorstep I could see the still tree-tops of the grove of death.'<sup>423</sup>

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<sup>421</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 21.

<sup>422</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 21.

<sup>423</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 22.

Here the semi-colon (first noted and interpreted by the critic Anthony Fothergill as being representative of Conrad's 'semi-colonialism')<sup>424</sup> illustrates the causal chain linking the accountant with the dying Congolese, with Kurtz, and, ultimately, the Company. The interdependence becomes, as it were, a unifying spirit (or 'flabby devil') to which the accountant is perhaps (as with previous Company agents) wilfully blind.

The next agent of the Company that Marlow encounters is the general manager, the first indication that Marlow is in some sense escalating towards those most culpable for the collective project of colonialism. The manager is 'a common trader' who 'inspired neither love nor fear, nor even respect... uneasiness – that was it'.<sup>425</sup> The general manager, as with all the Administration's agents, reveals yet more about the nature of the Company and the colonial project within the novella, and — by implication — the activities of colonial Europe. The manager has 'no learning, no intelligence', 'no genius for organising, for initiative, or for order' and appears to owe his station to the fact that 'he was never ill'.<sup>426</sup> The simplicity of this attribute, which the manager himself describes as a virtue ('Men who come out here should have no entrails'), reflects the practicalities of what it took to function within the Congo, as shown in Conrad's own *Congo Diary*,<sup>427</sup> as well as suggesting that the only attribute required for a collective entity, such as the Company or a government, is the ability to survive and thrive. There is also a suggestion in this metaphor that the manager lacks basic human qualities and, in this sense, he is very different from Marlow and even Kurtz: where Kurtz is stripped bare and skeletal, the manager is hollowed out; where Kurtz represents the colonial project in the raw, the manager is its paper-thin veil of civility. This contrast appears to touch upon a deeper truism, as an Administration or corporate endeavour need not function efficiently, it merely needs to avoid becoming bankrupt or being disbanded, while a public administrative body (a notion famously suggested by Machiavelli and of which there is an implicit undercurrent in More's *Utopia*) need only maintain power in order to wield power. It

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<sup>424</sup> Fothergill, 'Cannibalising Traditions: Representation and Critique in *Heart of Darkness*'.

<sup>425</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 24.

<sup>426</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 24.

<sup>427</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 161. Conrad continually refers to the health of himself and his compatriots which changes almost daily. His companion, Harou, is described as almost continually ill and 'giving up'.

is within the context of these references to fortitude, and how it trumps both efficiency and virtue, that Marlow learns that Kurtz himself is ill. The manager's description of Kurtz ('an exceptional man, of the greatest importance to the Company') reveals, as with the chief accountant, that the frame of reference within which Kurtz may be considered 'exceptional' and 'satisfactory' is that of the Company's desire for survival and profit — rather than any qualities traditionally regarded as virtuous. Thus, it is these musings by the manager regarding what is desirable which lead Marlow to describe him (in an explicit reference to *Faust*) as a 'papier-mâché Mephistopheles'.<sup>428</sup> In these two encounters, Conrad draws together elements of earlier works which employ administrator characters to critically comment upon ideas and ideologies concerning control, knowledge and power — unifying them into a single assault upon the very concept of colonialism.

The 'first class agent' Marlow next describes, an individual believed by Marlow to be the 'Manager's spy', has been officially tasked with 'the making of bricks' (a task he cannot fulfil due to an absence of raw materials) but really appears to have been ordered to 'pump' Marlow for information regarding the inner workings of the Administration in Europe.<sup>429</sup> That this officer, the 'spy', has been tasked with official duties he cannot possibly perform doesn't strike Marlow as 'uncongenial', and the officer himself, as with all the junior Company agents, only really desires to 'get appointed to a trading-post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages'.<sup>430</sup> It is within the context of Marlow's close encounter with the base financial incentives upon which the Administration is built that he encounters the painting made by Kurtz:

...a woman draped and blindfolded carrying a lighted torch. The background was sombre – almost black. The movement of the woman was stately, and the effect of the torchlight on the face was sinister.<sup>431</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 69.

<sup>429</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 27.

<sup>430</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 27.

<sup>431</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 28.

This sense of a willing blindness — here, embodied in the blindfolded subject of the painting — is evoked again in the purposelessness of the official duties of the ‘spy’ (who has effectively been given alternative tasks designed to further the interests of his superior, which he accepts in so far as they further his own desire for promotion) and introduces an alternative interpretation to that traditional image of a blindfolded woman as representing ‘blind justice’. The construction of this passage links the description of the painting with Marlow’s own reactions to the ‘spy’, blending the imagery of the painting with Marlow’s emotive internal dialogue and economic insights into the realities of corporate endeavours. In this way Conrad implicates every Company employee, and every individual expounding the Administration’s ideology, so that they, as with the accountant and the grove of death, are treated as ultimately interdependent. This perception is enhanced, rather than weakened, by being placed into conflict with the perception of the ‘spy’ that Kurtz is ‘an emissary of pity, and science and progress, and the devil knows what else’.<sup>432</sup> It seems evident that Conrad’s intention is to promote an awareness in the reader of how Marlow is internally conflating the Administration with the futility and complicit blindness depicted in the painting, and, subsequently, the reader is guided towards the same view. Furthermore, Marlow’s belief that this conflation is an insight shared with Kurtz leads the reader to (falsely) presume that Kurtz will, indeed, offer salvation, or at least a coherent explanation and exposition as to the cause of this willing blindness and the pitiless folly of colonialism.

This impression, that Kurtz offers some form of beneficent knowledge, is implied throughout book one. Marlow’s journey begins with self-conscious allusions to the heroic quest:

to understand the effect of it on me you ought to know how I got out there, what I saw, how I went up that river to the place where I first met the poor chap. It was the furthest point of navigation and the culminating point of my experience. It seemed somehow to throw a kind of light on everything about me...<sup>433</sup>

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<sup>432</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 28.

<sup>433</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 11.



It appears to be no accident that, prior to this statement, Marlow has been described as having the ‘pose of a Buddha’.<sup>434</sup> What the reader may reasonably expect, therefore, is a tale which echoes the classical mythic themes of a quest towards enlightenment, or even an apotheosis. The first time Marlow hears of Kurtz (from the accountant) he is told Kurtz is a ‘very remarkable person’.<sup>435</sup> The second time Marlow hears of Kurtz is from the manager, who tells him Kurtz is ill, but it is not until the manager’s ‘spy’ reveals that it was Kurtz who painted the image of the blindfolded lamp bearer that Marlow’s interest is piqued: ‘who is this Mr. Kurtz?’<sup>436</sup> Such is Marlow’s dislike of the manager and his spy, that Kurtz seems to present a point of favourable comparison and even an authority figure to be invoked (as when speaking to the assistant-manager, Marlow states that ‘When Mr. Kurtz [...] is General Manager, you won’t have the opportunity’<sup>437</sup> although at that time Marlow admits he ‘did not see the man in the name any more than you do’.<sup>438</sup> It is, ironically, Marlow’s revulsion for the assistant-manager which leads him to adopt this man’s opinion of Kurtz as being a ‘universal genius’,<sup>439</sup> and to impose upon Kurtz the same standards Marlow himself held: ‘rivets were what really Mr. Kurtz wanted – if he had only known it.’<sup>440</sup> What Marlow has clearly done is taken the reports of Kurtz’s efficiency at delivering ivory and equated them to moral, intellectual and cultural superiority, in the same manner that his aunt had done with the Company itself. Here, in effect, Conrad is echoing the broader relationship arch of European culture with the exploits of King Leopold II’s Congo within Marlow’s relationship arch with Kurtz, and Marlow, despite himself, falls back on colonial propaganda. To Marlow’s credit, however, he does not take this as a given, and instead resolves to seek out Kurtz, a decision being the sentence which closes book one, when Marlow states how he ‘was curious to see whether this man who had come out equipped with moral ideas [...] would climb to the top after all and how he would set about his work’.<sup>441</sup> It

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<sup>434</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 10.

<sup>435</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 22.

<sup>436</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 28.

<sup>437</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 28.

<sup>438</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 29.

<sup>439</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 32.

<sup>440</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 31.

<sup>441</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 33.

is not until book two that Marlow encounters evidence to cause both him and the reader to reassess the initial impression that *Heart of Darkness* is a refashioning of the quest.

Although some considerable ‘actual’ time is implied as elapsing (at least three weeks and four days are explicitly referred to), Marlow’s first meeting with Kurtz is presented in the text almost immediately after his meeting with the general manager. Marlow’s descriptions of Kurtz, leading up to his description of his first actual encounter, blend his expectations of the man with his retrospective assessment, but it is clear that Marlow has — at least initially — separated the Company and Kurtz in his own mind:

Not of course that I did not connect him with some sort of action. Hadn’t I been told [...] that he had collected, bartered, swindled, or stolen more ivory than all the other agents together. That was not the point. The point was in his being a gifted creature.<sup>442</sup>

Marlow’s description of Kurtz’s supposed gift — his ability ‘to talk’ as if ‘from the heart of an impenetrable darkness’ — appears, at this moment, wishful thinking. Marlow, at the time he reports having this thought, has yet to hear or read Kurtz. Furthermore, these musings are formed whilst worrying the knot of a dead man’s shoes. Marlow, at this point in the narrative, has previously been described as travelling down the Congo in a steamer, and his helmsman, who has been stabbed by a spear, bursts into the cabin and collapses at Marlow’s feet, covering his shoes in blood. Marlow’s narration leaps ahead chronologically mid passage to describe Kurtz. The latter is depicted as being, in person, the ‘spoiled and pampered favourite’ of the wilderness, and it is indicated that ‘Europe contributed to the making of Kurtz’. This is also the first time it is mentioned that the ‘International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs’ had commissioned a ‘report’ from him.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 48.

<sup>443</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 50.

It gave me the notion of an exotic Immensity ruled by an august Benevolence [...] There were no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases, unless a kind of note at the foot of the last page [...] may be regarded as the exposition of a method...  
 Exterminate all the brutes!<sup>444</sup>

After this description — which links Kurtz's speech, his apparent relationship with the jungle, and his influence upon colonial ideology — Marlow immediately returns to a chronological account. After the aforementioned description of Kurtz, Marlow describes how his 'subtle bond' with the helmsman — 'a claim of distant kinship' — was built upon the fact the helmsman was 'a help – an instrument'. Marlow then compares the helmsman and Kurtz, concluding that Kurtz was not 'exactly worth the life [of the helmsman] we lost in getting him'.<sup>445</sup> Marlow's description of this supposed bond, which (Marlow acknowledges) is founded upon practical and mutual benefit, is worth more to Marlow than Kurtz's life. This suggests that Marlow's narration is designed by Conrad to reveal the imposition of Marlow's retrospective moral judgments — judgements he has reached after the events he is recounting. It also reveals that Marlow's account of his journey is given by a narrator who regards relationships as analogous to causal chains, and, in this way, Conrad appears to encourage the reader to view Marlow's account as being one of the causal chains which links Kurtz's atrocities with the offices of the Administration, and with the wilful blindness of those who support it, such as Marlow's own aunt or the clerk working in the Administration's office. For Marlow, his relationship with the helmsman appears to exist outside of the relationships influenced or proscribed by the Administration, and in this instance, Marlow implicitly draws a contrast between the relationships influenced by the Company and this shared bond. This point in the novella appears to begin a trend in Marlow's narration which aligns those relationships linked to Kurtz, and those which are linked explicitly to Company. Thus, through Marlow's narrative emphasis upon occupational and causal relationships, Kurtz and the Company become linked as if by their *natures* — by dint of their both being symptomatic, composite entities subject to multiple

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<sup>444</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 51.

<sup>445</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 51.

interpretations. In this way, Conrad subtly ‘swaps’ the abstract Company for an individual, Kurtz. The reader is then able to judge the consequential outcomes of the Company’s actions as they would the actions of one man: Kurtz. Kurtz and the Company become effectively *the same* — they are both processes of systemic corruption. Kurtz appears, in this light, to be proffered by Conrad as a convenient focal point of moral judgement through which the reader is able to frame his or her attitude towards the activities of the Company as a whole.

Marlow learns of Kurtz’s activities via his encounter with the young man who reminds Marlow of a harlequin.<sup>446</sup> The harlequin describes how Kurtz led the local tribe on raids in the forest, and suggests Kurtz has become something akin to a divine figure to them. The harlequin is also the first character apart from Marlow to indicate that Kurtz was no longer behaving in a manner consistent with traditional Western morality (nor even in a ‘satisfactory’ manner). It is the harlequin who first describes how Kurtz has come to believe that ‘there was nothing on earth to prevent him killing whom he jolly well pleased’.<sup>447</sup> Here Kurtz is clearly depicted as somehow surpassing or going beyond the role of a Company agent — the ‘civilising’ claims made on Kurtz’s behalf outdo even the Company’s apparent goal of ‘weaning those ignorant millions of their horrid ways’.<sup>448</sup> The general manager similarly declares that Kurtz has employed an ‘unsound method’. Marlow’s immediate questioning of this claim suggests that he considers Kurtz’s methods to be, in fact, the logical conclusion of the colonial project: the elimination of the current population as part of the continuing exploitation of the environment. In fact, Conrad appears to intend that the reader consider the manager to be more out of step with the Administration’s goals than Kurtz, as it has previously been made clear that, from the chief accountant’s perspective at least, Kurtz’s methods are ‘very satisfactory’.<sup>449</sup>

Conrad uses Marlow’s narration to foreshadow his eventual revelations, instilling in the reader a sense of acquiring ‘first hand’ experience, after Marlow’s foreshadowing has, already, effectively directed the reader as to how to interpret it. One such

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<sup>446</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 53.

<sup>447</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 54.

<sup>448</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 16.

<sup>449</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 21.

instance of the use of this technique is when Marlow examines Kurtz's hut from a distance and mistakes posts surrounding the hut for the remains of a fence. Upon examination with his telescope, Marlow sees (in a passage which extends to cover a page):

...food for thought and also for vultures if there had been any looking down from the sky, but at all events for such ants as were industrious enough to ascend the pole. They would have been more impressive had they not been turned to the house. Only one, the first I had made out was facing my way. I was not so shocked as you may think.... I had expected to see a knob of wood there, you know... it was black, dried, sunken, with closed eyelids – a head that seemed to sleep at the top of that pole.<sup>450</sup>

The effect of having Marlow shift from describing what he is viewing ('such ants as were industrious enough to ascend the pole') to what he is experiencing ('I was not so shocked as you may think') is that there is no one affirmable point at which the reader really 'knows' what is at the top of the post until Marlow states it clearly. But the slow 'reveal' allows the reader to experience a slow dawning of realisation similar to what Marlow describes himself as having felt. This passage seems to encapsulate the process of realisation Marlow has experienced, the seeds of which can be found in every encounter Marlow had along the Congo, and in particular within those interactions he has had with the Company's agents. Marlow concludes this description with the assertion, 'I am not disclosing any trade secrets' (which affirms a reading in which Kurtz acts as a personification of the Company itself by echoing Marlow's memory of the contract of employment he signed with the Company).<sup>451</sup> The subsequent statement that 'there was nothing exactly profitable in these heads' suggests, then, that behind the apparent differences between Kurtz's actions and the profit motive of the Company, they are, in fact, casually related: that the former was, in a very real sense, the inevitable outcome of the latter.

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<sup>450</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 57.

<sup>451</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 12.

The paucity of direct descriptions of Kurtz by Marlow leave the reader depending upon a myriad of different impressions and accounts. Kurtz is described as being a diminished and unimposing figure, ‘like an ivory ball’ the wilderness appears to have ‘embraced him, got into his veins, consumed his flesh, and sealed his soul to its own’,<sup>452</sup> with ‘a cage of ribs’ and ‘bones’ of arms, an ‘image of death carved out of old ivory’ with a ‘deep voice’,<sup>453</sup> a ‘vision of greyness without form filled with physical pain and a careless contempt for the evanescence of all things’.<sup>454</sup> This absence of clear description serves to grant Kurtz the attributes of a communal experience, revealed to Marlow in the same manner as his experiences of the many facets of the Company. What the Company *is* — as a composite of its practical impact and its constituent members — remains dependent upon the individual descriptions and actions of its agents, who themselves provide Marlow with an assortment of impressions of the Company itself. The emphasis of the narrative seems to shift slowly from a question of whether Kurtz is to be regarded as an iconic manifestation of the Company, to one of whether Kurtz is an unintended by-product of the Company, to a guided conclusion that Kurtz is at one end of a causal chain and the Company is at the other, and both parties are defined by this relationship. It is in this way, we might say, that Conrad makes explicit the peculiar relationship *between* agent and institution (albeit at a much greater scale) that the texts examined in the earlier chapters in this thesis address implicitly.

Kurtz’s impact upon the Congo is presented by Marlow as being more significant than is indicated in the details disclosed by the personal witnesses Marlow interacts with. The ‘actual’ extent of Kurtz’s influence on the Congo is most clearly hinted at in Marlow’s reaction to the ‘wild and gorgeous apparition of a woman’.<sup>455</sup> The precise nature of the relationship between Kurtz and this woman remains ambiguous, although she is described by the Russian harlequin as being able to enter his cabin freely, and as having talked ‘like fury to Kurtz for an hour’.<sup>456</sup> Perhaps ironically, it is through these accounts that the extent to which the Europeans are blind to the

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<sup>452</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 49.

<sup>453</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 59.

<sup>454</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 69.

<sup>455</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 58.

<sup>456</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 61.

culture of the Congolese is also revealed, as Kurtz is depicted as engaging in more of a dialogue with the Congolese woman than Marlow, or any individual Marlow describes, ever has. Furthermore, the harlequin describes how this woman had ‘kicked up a fuss’ about his use of the ‘miserable rags’ to patch his clothes. Yet Marlow has already described these patches as anything but ‘miserable rags’: indeed, Marlow describes them as ‘blue, red, and yellow [...] scarlet edging [...] gay and wonderfully neat’.<sup>457</sup>

This appears like it might be a reference to colonial treaties struck by Stanley. From 1888 onwards, Stanley abandoned his former patrons, the British, in favour of a commission by King Leopold II. Leopold II (in return for 50,000 francs a year in payment) commissioned Stanley to return to the Congo (nominally) on behalf of international scientific philanthropy, namely as an agent of Leopold II’s subsequently financed International African Society. Stanley was, in actuality, ordered to negotiate with the local tribes to secure contracts (known colloquially among the colonials as ‘cloth and trinket’ contracts) with Congolese tribal leaders. These contracts were exchanged for land, conscripts and legal authorities.<sup>458</sup> Over the following five years, Stanley concluded some four hundred ‘cloth and trinket’ treaties with Congolese leaders. The Congolese appeared to believe (or were mis-sold) these contracts as friendship pacts, but they were, in fact, trading their land (at least, in the eyes of Western international trade agreements). For example, on 1 April 1884, leaders of the Ngombi and Mafela traded ‘one piece of cloth per month [...] for themselves and their heirs and successors for ever [...] all sovereign and governing rights to all their territories’.<sup>459</sup> The irony is that the Russian youth (the harlequin) owes his current situation to the social and economic interactions and relationships

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<sup>457</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 53.

<sup>458</sup> Morton Stanley arrived at the Congo region in May 1879. His expedition marched nearly 200 kilometres up the river to Vivi, where fourteen Europeans supervised 240 Africans in building a trading station that was completed in January 1880. One year later the second station at Isangila was finished, and by then Stanley had lost six Europeans and 22 Africans to unspecified disease. Conrad wrote in this *Congo Diaries* that he saw Stanlyfall in 1890. At or near this time Stanley fell ill with a sickness diagnosed (or at least described) at the time as malaria (although his symptoms match those of Congo trypanosomiasis) and nearly died, his weight allegedly dropping to 100 pounds. The analogies between the circumstances of Conrad’s experience of Stanley and Marlow’s experience of Kurtz seem irrefutable. For more see Emerson, *Leopold II of the Belgians: King of Colonialism*.

<sup>459</sup> Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold’s Ghost* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), p. 72.

forged around these pieces of cloth, yet is himself entirely ignorant of their meaning, with ‘no more idea of what would happen to him than a baby’.<sup>460</sup> As Stanley reported directly to Leopold II, and Leopold II worked hard to keep his investments in the Congo and subsequent profits secret, Stanley’s actions must have seemed outlandish to non-Belgium Europeans, who were themselves recruited and deployed under cover of Leopold II’s publicised goals of civilisation and progress. The image of a colonial administrator, ravaged by fever, who is a ‘carrier’ of ‘the colonial disease’ is therefore both an image of a victim and of the causal agent of the disease of colonialism. Conrad’s use of this and other narrative associative forms allow the author to indicate a sense of the ineffable, a quality to the human experience under such conditions too great to be conveyed with words which Conrad, though his strict and disciplined use of location and journey, manages to *politicize*. Conrad seems, perhaps, to hint that such experiences are ineffable as the language and narrative forms required are themselves repressed or even countered by the colonial project.

Conrad’s description of Kurtz (such as his motives, his influences, or how he was before his decline) can be read as fulfilling a similar function to the depiction of those characters studied in earlier chapters — allowing the author to make certain claims or observations without the requirement to provide a detailed account of infrastructure in the process. Conrad’s innovation, however, lies in his use of metaphor, inference, characterisation and analogy, through which Kurtz provides a focal point within the narrative, for the novella’s wider concerns: the Company and the colonial disease. Thus, figuratively speaking, Kurtz may be seen as a compilation of each of the individual administrator characters within the novella, or even as a depiction of these same individual characters in an alternative occupation and circumstance.

### Conclusion

Conrad wrote during a time when the line between state activity and corporate enterprise was blurred by international changes in finance, law and governance — and, as Marlow’s use of them suggests, the terms ‘Administration’ and ‘the Company’ were in the context of colonialism often effectively synonyms. In this

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<sup>460</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 54.



sense, *Heart of Darkness* may be read as one of the earliest interrogations of an emergent monopoly capitalism. Soon after Leopold II's reign ended, the United Mines of Upper Katanga (UMHK) was created, an organisation which eventually 'controlled about 70 percent of the economy of the Belgian Congo [...] and controlled the exploitation of cobalt, copper, tin uranium and zinc in mines which were among the richest in the world'.<sup>461</sup> Conrad's representation and use of administrator characters achieves the same combination of representing and interrogating this new form of institutional power as Machiavelli and More did with the nascent nation state, Shakespeare with the constitutional monarch, Goethe with the entrepreneur and industrial planning, and Dostoevsky with Tsarism and early socialism. Conrad also reflects the historical emergence of new power structures, and the historical periods in which these institutions, in response to social change, were required to alter the means through which they exercised power from mass physical cohesion to the use of symbols and systematised knowledge.

The presence of the ineffable in *Heart of Darkness*, explored through the prism of the administrator character, suggests it is intended as a direct comment upon the fallacious appeals to and on behalf of knowledge by colonial institutions. Even before the establishment of the Congo Free State, scientific ideals were cited as justification for colonial activities. When Leopold II convened the 1876 Geographical Conference in Brussels, which led to the establishment of the International African Association, it was he who delivered the impassioned welcoming speech. Leopold II proclaimed that 'to pierce the darkness which hangs over entire peoples' was 'a crusade worthy of this century of progress'.<sup>462</sup> The Conference agreed to the establishment in the Congo of 'hospitable, scientific and pacification bases to be set up as a means of abolishing the slave trade, establishing peace among the chiefs, and procuring them just and impartial arbitration'.<sup>463</sup> The extent to which this idea of a continent under 'darkness' is present within *Heart of Darkness* is self-evident, but the specific connotations from which this idea of 'darkness' originates pertain to 'darkness' being, in the historical context of its usage in reference to Africa, related to a perceived absence of knowledge and understanding. It appears that Conrad

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<sup>461</sup> Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, p. 31.

<sup>462</sup> Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, p. 45.

<sup>463</sup> Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost*, p. 45.

sought to utilise the novella form to illustrate the complexity of the interactions occurring within and beyond the Congo, and thereby flag inherent flaws in any grand administrative endeavour. As colonial administration made clear, the still-emerging disciplines of anthropology and economics, and even practical considerations such as logistics, inevitably involve complex systems where experiments are costly, rare and limited in their ability to isolate objective, simple and controllable causal relations. Because of the complexity of the social, physical and cultural environment of the Congo, Conrad's literary arsenal of metaphor, narrative, plot and character have proved a more striking and enduring account of the exploitation of the Congo than could be found in any of the physical experiments conducted within the IAA bases.

Conrad's use of the administrator character is deeply woven into the novella, and character is, indeed, represented as *symptomatic* rather than essential. Conrad uses characterisation as one of the many elements of each of Marlow's encounters. Indeed, it might be suggested that, in *Heart of Darkness*, characterisation does not stop with the physical limits of the individual characters, but that their characterisation incorporates their surroundings, their location within Marlow's internal and external journey, their station in relation to the Company, and their impact upon Marlow's internal narrative. For instance, the character of the Company's director is conveyed expressly through his position at the beginning of the complex chain of interactions of which Kurtz lies at the end (he has his 'grip on the handle-end of ever so many millions').<sup>464</sup> Everything about the director is uncertain, 'an impression', from his height ('five feet six, I should judge'), to his actual movements (he 'shook hands, I fancy' and 'murmured vaguely').<sup>465</sup> There is no 'essence' to this director — one gets the sense that, within Marlow's subjective experience, *anyone* could be the director, without practical consequence. In actuality, no character in *Heart of Darkness* is presented separate to the influences of the Colonial project and the Company, and each character is, as such, *symptomatic* of the economic, cultural and international forces which have situated them in Marlow's path.

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<sup>464</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 14.

<sup>465</sup> Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, p. 14.

## Conclusion

### I

The impetus behind this thesis has been to trace and analyse a major aspect of characterisation that has seldom been made explicit in literary studies: the importance of the role that characterisation plays in the text's relationship with systematised power. The thesis aims to clarify and explore this connection by examining those characters within the primary texts who administrate on behalf of changing historical systems from the period of the early Renaissance through to the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>466</sup>

More and Machiavelli influenced the premises of the cultural debate concerning the power dynamics of Europe's developing institutions of modernity. This 'template' subsequently permeates the work of future authors and forms the foundations for future depictions of administrator characters. As critical scholarly consensus suggests, each was personally interested in the concept of 'humanism', by which was meant the renewed interest in the political systems and cultural practices of the ancient world, particularly Athens and Rome. Both More and Machiavelli used literary forms, in this way, as a medium through which to engage in a conceptual exploration of alternative modes of systematised power, employing classical societies as inspiration. Rhetoric permeated these systems and practices, and gained a renewed currency within Europe's elite as a representation of learning, authority, and culture. *Utopia* and *The Prince* are, I argue, each *rhetorical* exercises which thus address the specific relationship between the individual and the state. In this fashion, Early Modern European adaptations of classical rhetoric played a central role in an emergent *literary* examination of administrative systems — imaginative and intellectual accounts which provided a conceptual framework within which to perceive and respond to them.

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<sup>466</sup> The 'Renaissance' is, it should be recalled, understood within this thesis to refer, loosely, to the widespread cultural phenomenon which spread across much of Europe between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries, and which is typified by a renewed interest in and attempted adoption of classical social systems and culture.

Both More and Machiavelli operate, effectively, within the strict boundaries of an ideal of the perfected province — modelled on the ancient *polis* or republic — each arguing in favour of their proposition of what form such a state should take. By setting strict parameters, Machiavelli and More use their respective subject matter as testing grounds for extended metaphors to explore their own readings and interpretations of classical social and political arrangements, cognisant of the possibility of influencing their (potentially politically powerful) readership. In particular, both authors emphasised those aspects of the classics which pertained to governance and administration. In *The Prince* and *Utopia*, it is thus possible to perceive the first literary representations of the manifestation of a specifically *modern* form of systematised power, articulated in historical societies in which, however, the interlocking systems of governance, united by a common set of practices and references (today commonly described as ‘state apparatuses’), were not yet in place, nor had been fully conceived. As such, my argument has sought to demonstrate that both texts are orientated around the goal of representing an *argument* (rather than a fully existing reality), and that, in order to maintain their argument’s integrity, the authors used the techniques of rhetoric to imply abilities and processes on the part of ‘authority’ (be that the state, the Church, or a Prince) that were largely speculative in form. In this way, Machiavelli and More created the *impression* of a machinery of state capable of imposing central control, and so portrayed the character of the administrator as a conduit to unspecified, and never explicitly defined, forces. These implied abilities accorded to authority were, given the contemporary state infrastructure, highly improbable and, indeed, in some respects impossible. Consequently, the rhetorical liberties taken by these two authors appear to have shaped subsequent literary representations of the ‘role’ of power and of its administrators, to the point of altering public debates concerning the nature of governance itself, and altering perceptions around the capacity and potential of state influence. The political ‘Platonic ideals’, which provided the battleground over which Machiavelli and More jostled, constituted, effectively, a shared conception of knowledge and its relationship with power. And both Machiavelli and More, despite their use of rhetorical flourishes and poetic licence, appear to have believed that there was, ultimately, an ideal system and the possibility of its ideal application (unique and transitory though this may have been).

In *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and Fantasy of Empire*, a study of the Victorian construction of new modes of power and knowledge in the administration of Empire, Richards notes that in the modern era ‘we routinely assume that no power can possibly exist without its underlay of documents, memoranda, licenses, and files’.<sup>467</sup> In this sense, Shakespeare’s works appear to prefigure those Victorian conceptions of the relationship between power and knowledge examined by Richards, albeit expressed in accordance, of course, with the means by which it was encountered in the sixteenth century. Shakespeare’s fascination with the relationship between the verbal contract and the social compact represents, within his plays, the systems through which power manifests. Thus, Shakespeare depicts the forging and redefining of verbal contracts as a source of dramatic tension, as with the marriage or love vow in *The Taming of the Shrew* or *Romeo and Juliet*, the promise in *Hamlet*, *Lear* or *Macbeth*, and the social compact, such as the deal in *The Merchant of Venice*, the conspiracy in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and the role that both social compact and conspiracy play in *The Tempest*. The social compact, as with verbal contacts, is depicted as contestable, and, as a result, a central theme in Shakespeare’s plays concerns the tension between family obligations, duty, social obligation, and personal morality. Shakespeare’s use of administrator characters in the plays *A Midsummer’s Night Dream*, *The Tempest*, and *The Merchant of Venice* presented, in particular, a conception of power as synonymous with, and sustained by, rhetoric, pomp, and courtly protocol, which serve in these plays as a shared ‘language’, of sorts. As with Machiavelli and More, the idea of an investment of power in systems (as embodied in the characters of Ariel, Puck, and Balthazar) is often presented in the form of that power’s emissaries, and this relationship (between power and systems) appears often to be characterised as a patron bestowing power upon his or her benefactor. However, in Shakespeare, these characters are both more and less than emissaries. The manner in which these characters are presented appears, as such, to be fed by existing concepts of classical patronage and contemporary concepts of the court favourite, but also, significantly, in the case of *The Merchant of Venice* in particular, by the emergence of ‘new professional’ administrators, such as the advocate, the accountant, and the private secretary. The interests and motivations of these characters, while aligned with those of their patrons, remain distinct and

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<sup>467</sup> Richards, *Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*, p. 8.

separately delineated. In each case, these characters display the ability to interpret their instructions in the manner which they think best, and which, the plays imply, their patrons would almost certainly curtail or redirect were they privy to such liberties.

Reading Shakespeare with attention to his portrayal of administrators suggests, then, a new approach to the representation of power as being something which is not wholly owned even by those in which it is officially invested, but as a product of the interactions and customs by which it is exercised. Furthermore, Shakespeare's plays are one of the first instances in which the entropy of information is suggested. In societies in which invested power was such an important principle (prior, of course, to more mechanised methods of communication), the inherent danger of misunderstanding and cross communication was a frequent source of inspiration for the action of the plays themselves, as, for example, in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, *A Comedy of Errors*, *Twelfth Night* or *Macbeth*. In the plays examined, it is the administrator characters who convey the ways in which power is structured, arbitrated, interpreted, and executed. These characters also convey the ways in which power has ramifications for such underlying principles as the importance of correct speech (rhetoric), social norms (courtly protocol), and the formalised, socially recognised process of investment (patronage). Moreover, it is arguably this aspect of the plays that marks them as potentially subversive with regard to existing understandings of the (divine or hereditary) sources of political power.

Shakespeare's mode of administrative characterisation is a key component in the underlying conceptual framework of his texts, whilst simultaneously driving the plot forward. In my chapter on Shakespeare, I thus examined three of the characters Shakespeare uses to mediate systematised power in the text (Puck, Ariel and Balthazar) and examined how Shakespeare incorporates the external (and often unseen) influences of such power into the fabric of the play. Shakespeare's employment of administering characters continues those techniques developed by earlier Renaissance authors (as exemplified in the works of Machiavelli and More), while also innovating upon them. In particular, Shakespeare expanded the range of the administrator character by representing these characters as overt, and arch, products of power relations, while also questioning the authenticity and potency of these characters in relation to the systems of power they uncritically purport to

represent. Within each of the examined plays, the depiction of the administrator character thereby suggests a provocative undercurrent of subjugation and inauthenticity, which appears to lie at the root of some of the future administrator character's darker representations.

Written some two hundred years after Shakespeare's plays, Goethe's *Faust* incorporates a series of impressions of new systems of power, including emergent organisational structures and institutions of industrialisation, during the period of the Enlightenment and a developing capitalism. It is in the characterisation of Mephistopheles as an administrator, in particular, that *Faust* itself depicts a shift in systematised power from the classical and Renaissance humanist methods seen in the play's early scenes, to the later methods of industrialisation, labour and force employed in the play's latter scenes. The means by which Faust primarily undertakes his quest of 'endless striving' is Mephistopheles. At the same time, Mephistopheles' 'impression of worldly-mindedness', to use Carlyle's phrase, allows him to become a characterised conduit for the mundane processes whilst still conveying the uncanny and almost mystical quality of bureaucratic and administrative processes to effect the world, thus allowing Faust, by contrast, to represent the aesthetic quest for 'Inquiry and Endeavour'.<sup>468</sup> Faust's eventual triumph over Mephistopheles, without whom he could have achieved nothing, represents, in this way, a further layer within the play's thematic concerns: in order to continually achieve and strive, as the underlying dynamics of modernity demand, mankind must learn to interact with the very systems and methods it creates to achieve its ends.

If it is true that artists respond to new forms of organisation by developing new forms of art (such as with the novel in the eighteenth century),<sup>469</sup> such new artistic forms also appear to reflect social changes in both technology and social organisation, and the subtle, even ephemeral, changes characteristic of modern experience itself. This argument extends to new modes of systematised power as well. *Faust* suggests a web of impressions of a transitional period in Europe. These changes echo many of the changes (to social structure, the means of production and international relations) that the literature of Renaissance humanism earlier attempted

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<sup>468</sup> *The Carlyle Anthology*, ed. by Barrett.

<sup>469</sup> See, for example, the classic account of the (English) novel's modernity in Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1972).

to address. Much of the literature associated with Renaissance humanism may be seen as a reaction to such sweeping historical changes, as the past was re-approached in an attempt to regulate the present and control the future. Goethe's *Faust* may be read as an exemplary text which emerged from a period of similar turmoil (albeit, on a smaller, but, in some senses, more dramatic scale). *Part One* of *Faust* was completed in 1806 — the tail end of the Weimar Classicist attempt to revive humanism through a cultural return to romantic, classical and enlightenment ideals, of which *The Sorrows of Young Werther* was hailed as an emblem. *Part Two* of *Faust* was completed in 1831, a year from Goethe's death at the age of 82. Between the completion of *Part One* and *Part Two*, Goethe was writing within a context of a multitude of influences, including the end of the Holy Roman Empire; the Napoleonic Wars; the rise of the modern Prussian administrative state; the British Industrial Revolution; the Congress of Vienna and the German Confederation; and a ground swell of German nationalism which would culminate in the Hambach Festival.<sup>470</sup> Consequently, I am not the first to suggest that *Faust* may be read as containing a number of meditations upon the relationship between the individual (often perceived to be idealised in the Weimar Classicist interpretations of the Renaissance) and the collective, mass, historical phenomena apparent in new emerging industrial and market forces. In this respect, the character of Faust may be understood as reflecting aspects of a broader transition from Weimar Classicist ideals of the individual to the 'modern' individual who is idealised in the entrepreneur and the philanthropist. Whereas Goethe's earlier writing advocated a philosophy of *Sturm und Drang*, in *Faust*, the play rapidly moves away from the 'storm and urge' of Faust's thirst for knowledge and longing for romance, towards the quest for self-determinism and, in so doing, introduces new, more properly modern concepts of eternal or endless striving.<sup>471</sup> Through comparison with the Mephisto of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, it becomes clear that Goethe's characterisation of Mephistopheles represents more than diabolic urges. Mephistopheles appears to vocalise both Faust's inner turmoil and to represent those external forces which threaten Faust's goals of lasting achievement (such as, mundanely, easy gratification and even procedural frustration). It is thus

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<sup>470</sup> See R. R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, 8 (New York: AA Knopf 1964).

<sup>471</sup> Chesterton, *Chaucer*, pp. 158-9.



Mephistopheles who provides both Faust and the audience with, to use Carlyle's phrase, an 'impression of worldly-mindedness', by allowing Mephistopheles to become a character embodying the mundane processes of the world, and by contrast allow Faust to represent the aesthetic quest for 'Inquiry and Endeavour'.<sup>472</sup>

*Faust* is a text which has, at its core, a central driving conceit of the legal contract between Faust and Mephistopheles. Thus, it is that those artistic techniques deployed in earlier works, which had been used to engage with concepts of *natural order* (which still resonated during the early nineteenth century as in residual conceptions of the natural superiority of nobility), give way to techniques which express a growing awareness of the importance of *social order* (such as economic and class factors) which are conveyed in literature through language, character motivations and plot devices. In *Faust*, the relationship between knowledge and power explicitly transforms in the course of the play from one in which power is achieved through knowledge, to one in which power is the product of social relationships, institutions, norms, contracts and happenstance. That is to say: *Faust* begins by entertaining the Platonic ideals of knowledge and power, which informed so much of the work of Machiavelli, More, and Shakespeare, and ends with a new reverence for the level of complexity required to systemise power in the new century.

In 'The Grand Inquisitor', Dostoevsky incorporates a presentation of institutions (such as the Orthodox Church) as well as contemporary debates around how best to order an increasingly complex and extended modern society, through his portrayal of the Inquisitor. As I argued throughout the chapter, Dostoevsky's *specific* intention here seems to be to engage with the socialist doctrines emerging in certain strands of contemporary Russian politics, whilst incorporating the influences of a wider European intellectual culture, such as the Scottish Enlightenment. In this way, Dostoevsky effectively equates ideology with institution in the same manner as, at an earlier moment, Machiavelli equated practical power with the perception of power. Moreover, as with all the texts examined within this thesis, Dostoevsky appears to examine this relationship primarily through character, rather than through either mythic language or treatise. Whereas an *authentic* relationship may be formed between monarchy and subject in More's *Utopia*, however, Dostoevsky innovatively

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<sup>472</sup> *The Carlyle Anthology*, ed. by Barrett.

uses an administrator character to propose that there is an inherent *inauthenticity* which results from the interactions between individuals and institutions. Systems of power are not presented as ‘naturally emerging’ or as conforming to predetermined principles in Dostoevsky’s novels; rather, they are human conceptions and products of human desires. The Inquisitor’s ‘Platonic ideal’ of the Church, for example, is a grotesque distortion of traditional Christian values (a marked contrast to More). Dostoevsky’s presentation of the Inquisitor is nonetheless a continuation of the tendency to use characterisation as one means by which to incorporate external concepts of power *into* the narrative by depicting the impact such wider concepts, and their manifestation in material institutions, have upon the personality, interactions and philosophy of a given individual.

Of the many characters in *Heart of Darkness* who may be read as administrator characters, Kurtz, the Company men, and ‘the Administration’ — significantly Marlow uses the terms ‘Administration’ and ‘the Company’ interchangeably — act within Conrad’s text as manifestations of a kind of ‘unifying principle’, in a manner akin to the ways in which Shakespeare used a set of communal reference points associated with power in Elizabethan England (a composite characterisation apparent in the aggregate that emerges through the depictions of multiple minor characters and symbolic events). Collectively, Conrad’s characters recast the noble claims made by various individual figures within the text in defence of colonialism, portraying them as disingenuous and corrupt (the individual characters may genuinely believe their various claims, but as a collective they are portrayed as wrong). These ‘manifestations’ are indicative of the forms of organisation and exploitation underlying colonialism, as perhaps *the* administrative problem of European power in the late nineteenth century, and are presented symbolically rather than journalistically (which is to say, formally). Significantly, all attempts to express this ‘unifying principle’ in *Heart of Darkness* are never shown to be fully satisfactory, putting in question what ultimately may be expressed of a progressively complex and abstract form of systematised power, and asking whether some aspects of such power are inevitably ineffable or beyond narrative explanation.

It is broadly accepted that Conrad was required to move beyond traditional literary techniques to satisfactorily depict a story that incorporated his own experiences in the Congo. In *Heart of Darkness*, this is most obviously apparent, arguably, in

Conrad's attempts to represent the phenomenon of the 'agent' (that an individual may, in some sense, be merely a product of an underlying system, and simultaneously embody that system); abstraction (that established symbols, even symbols of power such as brutality or wealth, dissipate when forced out of their specific setting); and ineffability (that some forces, by definition, defy formal description). Hence, linear narrative is replaced by weaving, non-linear recollections. The narration is highly subjective; individual events are presented, and overtly acknowledged as having symbolic importance; and highly symbolic items and descriptions have multiple possible interpretations. In the case of *Heart of Darkness*, the apparent link between administrator characterisation, systems of power, and perceptions and expectations of knowledge can be read as exemplified in Conrad's depiction of the company's agents as being 'symptomatic' of European moral decadence — an effect achieved in particular through the incorporation of the imagery of plague and 'feverish' narration. The colonial administrator character in *Heart of Darkness* may be approached, in this sense, as just one of the many symptoms of such wide spanning phenomena (such as the rise of global commerce) which defy formal explanation, and cannot (currently) be captured through anything other than abstraction. As these underlying causes are effectively ineffable, Conrad's administrator characters suggest, rather than attempt to encapsulate, the products of the failing attempts by colonials to apply systems of power out of their specific context — a failure so challenging as to raise fundamental questions for European hierarchy, practices, and social norms in general.

## II

This thesis demonstrates, through the readings of its chosen texts, the influence of the administrator character trope as a kind of pre-history of our contemporary power relations (both in artistic representation and in our own relationships with systematised power). By tracing the roots of this trope back to their earliest appearances in the literary canon of the Early Modern period, this thesis thus seeks to contribute to a greater understanding of both the historical production and forms of subjectivity incorporated into a given text. As social and cultural constructs, texts may accurately reflect, subvert, and perhaps inspire, the development of systematised power. Europe, between the eras of 'the Renaissance' and a fully-developed capitalist 'modernity', saw great changes in the means of coordinating and

systematising collective human action. These means included (in no particular order) the constitutional monarchy, the corporation, the nation state, the guild, the political party, and new financial institutions. All of these systems may be viewed, on the most basic level, as ways of organising power in its various forms — or systematised power, if you will. Such changes were as much cultural as they were political or economic, and were reflected, and reflected upon, within literature. And as such systems grew in size and number, experiences of institutional malaise, abstraction and alienation became common enough to influence a range of cultural movements from the nineteenth century onwards.

In this sense, my thesis may also be read, among other things, as offering something like a prehistory of the more familiar figure of the administrator as he appears, most famously, in Kafka's modernist nightmares written during the 1910s and 1920s; texts which are populated by characters who appear to respond to forces outside the immediate narrative, as in *The Trial* and *The Castle*. While this sense of external machination was a particular preoccupation in Kafka's literature, a feeling of alienation from, and persecution by, some 'outside' and even 'unknowable' force are common themes within various forms of literature from the latter half of the nineteenth through to the early twentieth century, embracing, for example, parts of Balzac's *Human Comedy* (particularly in 'House of the Tennis Playing Cat'), Dickens's *Bleak House* and Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*, as well as the dystopian administrations of Zamiatin's *We* and Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Indeed, more often than not, the administrator character came to be the primary means by which this theme was invoked.

'Tributaries' of different modes of characterisation which were employed to reflect contemporary issues and concerns appear to have coalesced, at least within western European literature, in the works of authors such as More, Machiavelli and Shakespeare. These methods of characterisation were utilised as a means to incorporate, and even to address, issues arising from changes in existing forms of social organisation. These techniques of literary representation were continued into the core functionality and dramatic resonance of the twentieth-century administrator type. The 'types' of administrator characterisation seem to, in this sense, 'fan out' in the writing of later authors, apparently informed by the characterisation which appears in earlier works. Within some texts over the course of the twentieth century,

the administrator character develops as such into a mere cipher which, introduced at the right time and with the right symbolism, functions simply to indicate to the reader layers of machination behind all prior events, and all events to follow. At the same time, the administrator is increasingly presented as the focal point for a satirical comment upon political systems, and later, removed from its initial historical and cultural context in humanist rhetoric, re-appears in a progressively stereotyped form in late twentieth-century popular culture, where he or she has been embraced as a means to insert sweeping narrative shifts without disrupting the verisimilitude of the world depicted.

Such diversity and continuity appears to be present in the works of Kafka. In *The Trial*, the parable of the door keeper is used to illustrate to K. why he is ‘deluding’ himself by believing the Priest, and by implication anyone implicated within the administrative systems of the law. Thus, within the context of *The Trial*, the ‘character’ of the door keeper appears to be used by Kafka to serve the function of an administrator character for the Priest. Thus, in a similar fashion to Dostoevsky’s Inquisitor story, this parable becomes a kind of ‘quintessence’ for the main body of the text. As a major theme of *The Trial* is the relationship between the individual and collective systems of organisation, Kafka portrays each individual within the novel as implicated in ‘the law’, with the ‘administrator character’ of the main body of the novel being the illusion of progress, described by K as being, within the world of the novel, the ‘lie fundamental to world order’.<sup>473</sup> Within *The Castle*, Kafka incorporates a similarly pervasive characterisation of administration as — this time through the continual inclusion of the trappings of communication — the fact that it lacks any actual meaningful exchanges of information (both in material terms, as with the phone in the inn which only emits ‘the buzzing of countless children’s voices’,<sup>474</sup> for example, or in terms of plot as with the continual quest by K. for an appointment with one functionary to arrange an appointment with another functionary).

*The Castle* portrays how administration is *both* dualistic and vague, and illustrates the effect of administration upon the individual. Administration is dualistic as it promises order, control and predictability, yet in practice tends to generate further

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<sup>473</sup> Franz Kafka, *The Trial* trans. by Idris Parry (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 172.

<sup>474</sup> Franz Kafka, *The Castle*. trans. by J. A. Underwood (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 19.

confusion. Administration is also vague in that no one individual or process is decisive or conclusive, but is part of a wider network of interactions and infrastructure.

The vagueness of administration is incorporated into the very geography of *The Castle* - K. is himself a Land Surveyor, and 'anyone living or spending the night here [the inn] is in a sense living or spending the night in the castle'.<sup>475</sup> The artefacts of administration are ever-present, as with the Mayor's cupboard 'completely stuffed with documents' which 'covered half the floor', and these artefacts appear as if bursting into the world.<sup>476</sup>

The individual artefacts which comprise the physical infrastructure of administration in *The Castle* also incorporate vagueness, duality and the impact upon the individual:

The earpiece emitted a buzzing sound unlike anything K. had heard before ... as if out of the buzzing of countless children's voices - but again, this was no buzzing, this was the song of distant, utterly distant voices - as if out of this buzzing there emerged in a quite impossible fashion a single high-pitched yet powerful voice that struck the ear as if demanding to penetrate deeper than into mere hearing.<sup>477</sup>

The telephone itself is a part of a wider infrastructure, and while a distinct object it is dependent upon being part of a network in order to be, in a practical sense, a 'telephone'. Kafka describes the buzzing as a simulacrum of an administration -- countless voices merging into one powerful voice. This effect is presented as being fully consciously experienced by K., and yet there is also an acknowledgment that K. knows this voice is, in some sense, an illusion.

Far more dystopian, perhaps, is Kafka's description of the administrative process describing the practical outcomes of administration's inherent vagueness:

When a matter has been under consideration for a very long time, it can happen, even without the considerations having been completed, that suddenly, with the speed of lighting, at an unforeseeable and subsequently also

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<sup>475</sup> Kafka, *The Castle*, p. 3.

<sup>476</sup> Kafka, *The Castle*, p. 55.

<sup>477</sup> Kafka, *The Castle*, p. 19.

untraceable point a settlement emerges that concludes the affair usually quite properly, I grant you, but none the less arbitrarily for that.<sup>478</sup>

This description of the castle's administrative system seems intended to be a comment on the act of administration itself as ultimately unaccountable, unpredictable, and uncontrollable -- effectively, chaotic:

[A]s if the official machinery ... had taken the decision spontaneously without the aid of the officials ... it's not possible ... even from the top, to find out which official decided in this case and on what grounds.<sup>479</sup>

In *The Castle* every aspect of the matter of the novel, including K. himself, is subsumed into the administrative fabric of the castle. Just as collected infrastructures (such as economies, or political factions) are not, in some sense, 'real', K. seems to know that the sense of an overarching super structure is, in the same way, not 'real', but its effects are no less palpable. In *The Castle* this administration acts as a parable indicating deeper and broader questions about the nature of being an individual entity in an integrated world.

Later works in which the administrator character appears may, perhaps, be viewed as expressing, above all, a certain anxiety that we as a species lack a language compatible with the sheer complexity of life viewed in the context of globalisation and the rise of the 'information age'. More recently in 'pop culture' the character of Number 2 in the series *The Prisoner*, *The X-Files* character the Cancer Man, the *Half-Life* game series character of G-Man, and many more — to the point of ubiquity — are all examples of characterisation and methods of presentation of themes and concerns which appear to ultimately derive from a canonical character trope rooted in the European Renaissance which evolved through adaptation over the course of modernity's development: the administrator character. In his book *The Imperial Archive*, Thomas Richards suggests that 'the thought of Bentham, and Mill with the thought of Russell and Keynes and C.P. Snow, was the idea that knowledge is inconceivable without the state'; this is already implicit in Hegel.<sup>480</sup> If this is correct, such a conception of knowledge, a notion that a mode of information which

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<sup>478</sup> Kafka, *The Castle*, p. 62.

<sup>479</sup> Kafka, *The Castle*, p. 62.

<sup>480</sup> Richards, *Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*, p. 74.

*depends* upon central administrative control, would certainly have influenced the trend — at least up until the 1970s — for state intervention in economics (beyond those roles of provision of non-market viable services and redistribution), education, health, and beyond state borders in the form of military action and financial aid. If the work of Keynes is generally taken to exemplify the theoretical underpinnings of such a trend in western Europe, its opposite pole is to be found in someone like Hayek's writings, which, from the publication of *The Road to Serfdom* in 1944, advocated a conception of knowledge as a shared phenomena, through which information may be dispersed without central control, and which suggested that any economy and, by extrapolation, any manifestation of systematised power, is 'a system in which the knowledge of the relevant facts is dispersed among many people'.<sup>481</sup> Just as Richard can marshal, then, ample evidence to support a dominant conception of knowledge as 'inconceivable without the state' in twentieth-century Britain and Europe, there was, during the same time, an intellectual movement which contradicted the consensus, and which would, in the last decades of the century, increasingly come to predominate.

The same appears to be true of all of the periods of time associated with the primary texts studied within this thesis, and, even more interestingly, appear to be held *within* many of the primary texts. Machiavelli and More are the most immediate examples of such a dichotomy. In *Utopia*, the characterised More defends Plato's assertions that philosophers might guide society towards equity, happiness and peace, while Hythloday dismisses such claims as fanciful in the face of collective ignorance: 'People who have made up their minds [...] are never pleased with the man [...] who [...] tells them they are [...] wrong'.<sup>482</sup> Machiavelli describes how a Prince may unite a state in *The Prince*, yet his advocacy of such a position at all points seems intended to pander to the intended reader ('the magnificent Lorenzo de' Medici', 'under your banner our country may become noble again').<sup>483</sup> In his *Discourses on Livy*, Machiavelli describes a Prince as only one of many stages along the path to his favoured mode of governance, a Republic (indeed, the title of Chapter 58 is 'the

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<sup>481</sup> Friedrich A. Hayek, 'The Use of Knowledge in Society', *American Economic Review*, XXXV.4 (1945), pp. 519-30.

<sup>482</sup> More, *Utopia*, p. 26.

<sup>483</sup> Machiavelli, *The Prince*, p. 3 and 72.



multitude is wiser and more constant than Princes'; a direct contraction of Hythloday's assertion).<sup>484</sup> Shakespeare's treatment of Shylock, the outsider to Venice and to the Court, is at times both condemnatory and sympathetic, and Portia, despite her cleverness, is depicted as being cruel and shallow through her treatment of the suitors. Indeed, none of the characters in *The Merchant of Venice* are entirely sympathetic or without blame, and consequently the underlying plot — that of the successful appeal to outside authority to settle a private contractual dispute — is far from advocating top-down governance. The other plays examined in this thesis are equally ambivalent regarding a preference for either emergent or imposed systems of power, and, collectively, appear to wish a 'pox on both houses'. Dostoevsky's 'The Grand Inquisitor', and the novel of which it is part (*The Brothers Karamazov*), could hardly be more conflicted regarding the role of institutions in relation to individuals. A more subtle distinction appears between the early Goethe and the later Goethe, in that Faust's worth is revealed not through his individual actions (many of which are reprehensible), but as an emergent outcome of the totality of his motivation for betterment, 'eternal striving'. *Heart of Darkness* is such a complex, diffuse and elusive text, it seems as if Conrad's intention was for it to provide the reader with the experience of a collection of scenarios and interconnected relationships which defy the impulse to impose a cohesive narrative — itself a possible 'metaphor' for the more grandiose goals of Imperialism. While Dostoevsky and Conrad appear to be the most antagonistic to appeals to administrative control (that is, systematised power), all the authors appear primarily to distrust *disingenuous* appeals to authority, be those appeals to divine right; moral, racial and intellectual superiority; purported consensus; or simple force of arms.

The central argument of this thesis has been that an administrator character of a text may act as a prism through which to analyse the depiction of systematised power, and the tensions or contradictions inherent within it, from which wider conclusions about the text's original climate may be drawn. Just as representations of power and knowledge appear to have influenced the very manner in which power and knowledge are manifested and performed, it appears that it may even be possible to suggest that administrative systems and individual administrative agents have been changed by the manner of their representation.

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<sup>484</sup> Machiavelli, *Discourses on the First Decade of Titus Livius*, p. 140.



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